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THE
GOSSIP'S WEEK.

A gossip's week has seven working days ;
When the prayer's over, then begins the tongue
As though it were Saint Maundy ;—and the night,
Which should bring Sabbath rest, must needs be spent
To swell the gallimaufry into eight.

Michael Poyner's Tragedy.

THE
GOSSIP'S WEEK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“SLIGHT REMINISCENCES.”

FAMILIAR MATTERS OF TO-DAY—
SOME NATURAL SORROW, LOSS, OR PAIN,
THAT HAS BEEN, AND MAY BE AGAIN.

Wordsworth.

WITH WOOD-CUTS FROM ORIGINAL DESIGNS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN;
AND JOHN RODWELL, BOND STREET.

1836.

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TO

SAMUEL BODDINGTON, Esq.

30500aken

If absence were always to lessen affection, you and I, my dear friend, would have been by this time heart-strangers, but I feel that we are still, and ever shall be, heart-friends; and thus thinking, inscribe to you my "GOSSIP'S WEEK," knowing that, while you gently hem down the bad, your kind nature will find out any good that may be in it, and love it for the sake of

Your old Crony,

THE AUTHOR.

Gen. & May 16 Oct 152 checked 20.

P R E F A C E.

BOCCACCIO's gossips (what an impolitic simpleton, says my reader, to put one in mind of him now,) were young Florentine damsels whom our fancies endue with exceeding beauty, rich robes of antique stuffs gorgeously wrought, gemmed clasps, and maiden graces; placing them on a swelling carpet of verdure within sound of a fountain, with a long forest glade sunny and southern, a broad palm tree, a shadowing vine, and perhaps the pillared portico of a marble villa, or a terrace balustrade with a white peacock glossing itself in the sunbeams, for accompaniments.

My gossips had pretty maidens too amongst them ; sweet listeners, and curious lovers of story-book lore ; with fine ears worthy of more delicate phrasing, but content to hearken to the simple tale of the stranger-land, or the home one, when the moonbeams rayed in through the open window, and the sound of the rippling sea came with it, and the perfume of the salt sea-weed that often has thought and distance in its fragrance. Lord love them for their kind hearts and gentle feelings, and for their ears too,—quick as the nymph Echo's, only drawing in the sound to be set in the memory, not evaporated by the lips.

Ah, those were sweet evenings which we passed together on that bright shore ! But what is its brightness to us now ?—*only a recollection* ; (what a volume might be written on these three words !) The gossips are scattered, north and south,—fate has so willed it ; and now that I sit by my winter fire, and think of other listeners—unseen and unknown ones, I cannot, even with the remembrance

of the charming indulgence which my former gossipings—sent out into the world without name, or friend, or paragraph—met with, in my heart, and the hope of again finding the same, in my mind, think of my new adventure without anxiety.*

Indifferent health, and the stay-at-home life which it necessitates, have made me a scribbler. After the exercise of those affections in which nature has placed the best and purest source of our delights, I know of nothing that has to do with earth,—unless it be the aspect of the beautiful world, and the beautiful sky that covers it,—which soothes and gladdens the heart so much as a good book. But ramblers, who run after health from Dan to Beersheba, have seldom room for many, and thus fall into the way of inditing their own imaginings, for want of having those of others to dwell upon.

* These Tales were written two or three years before the publication of the *Slight Reminiscences*, and now venture abroad, encouraged by the kind reception which the latter experienced.

To write is my dear enjoyment: would that to read what has often lured me out of the “pale cast of thought,” might be one to others;—but the word, I am well aware, claims too much—shall it be *amusement*?



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THE GLOVE.



THE GLOVE.



Lady, what mean you to do with that glove?
Wonders!—the small machinery of love
Makes armour sometimes.

Si potrò, sì—che mi farà possente
Amor ond' alta forza i men forti hanno.

Gerusalemme Liberata.

AT the foot of the fine range of hills that partially and at some distance surrounds the beautiful city of Turin, are many villages, and amongst them one more lonely than the rest, nixed in a green hollow, and so hidden from men's eyes, that he must have been a shrewd guesser who could have discovered it until he was in the middle of what its inhabitants called *the street*, though by what right they did so—except it might be that of ancient usage—it were hard to say.

Side by side with the church stood the inn, a house of humble entertainment, where, on holidays,

a well-seasoned olio and a cup of sour wine regaled the simple palate of the husbandman; and removed from it by a small vineyard, was a dwelling which, though poor and rustic, was of somewhat better mien than its neighbours, though not enough so to breed ill will to the owners. Within it lived a widow and her daughter, a simple child, but quick minded, and withal so fair and gentle, that she was known throughout the hamlet by the name of 'the Beloved.'

This widow's husband had been a learned lawyer, and once of high repute, holding an honourable station in Pisa, his native city. But ill health, and then ill fortune, had come upon him, and his heart—as it was said—had broken. Be that as it may, he died, leaving a sorrowful widow and an infant child, with little other dowry than their innocence.

Why Monaca Capaccio had come to settle in this lonely place, none knew; but she had lived there many years, never quitting it, and seeming to have nothing more to do with the outward world. Her neighbours respected her for what she had been, and loved her for the kindness which, even in her poor circumstances, she found means to show them.

It happened, about the time when her daughter, the young Dianora, had reached her thirteenth year, that one evening, an hour after sunset, two strangers entered the village, and stopping before the gate of the Aquila Nera, demanded where-withal to refresh themselves. Beds there were none, nor did the travellers require them; but the landlord, loath to lose guests of appearance so much above the usual frequenters of his house, was lavish—as far as promises went—of all other comforts. The strangers entered the kitchen, which was also the banquetting room, and hastened the preparations for supper; small skill was necessary to accommodate the simple materials to the urgency of hunger, and yet they crept on sluggishly, for to speak truth, honest Paolo had work for his thoughts as well as his fingers, and while with the one he seasoned the mess that simmered slowly over the half alive embers, the others were busily engaged in noting the strange aspect and stranger demeanour of his guests.

“Shut out the sun, Francesco,” said the elder, pointing to a window which opened on the street.

“The sun!” repeated Paolo, inwardly; “why he went to bed half an hour ago, and but for the

red lights on the mountains, we should have hard work to see our hands without a candle.”

While he thus ruminated, the youth closed the blind cautiously, and the elder guest continued to pace the floor with measured strides, stopping at intervals, and moving his lips as if he talked with his own thoughts. He was tall, and bore himself haughtily, like a proud soldier; or, as Paolo thought, like a captain of banditti. No sooner had this notion crossed his brain, than fear converted it into certainty, and his heart, being none of the stoutest, quailed within him. In the courteous demeanour of the youth, he found something more encouraging; and yet it was nearly guess work with them both, for their cloaks were pulled round them, and their hats flapped upon their faces far too cautiously for Paolo's curiosity, and much too cunningly, he thought, for good to come of it.

In the aforesaid kitchen were two windows; that which the youth had closed, and another which stood open and looked into the widow's vineyard. The supper was served, the wine cups filled with a most thin-flavoured beverage; yet still the senior cavalier paced up and down, and the youngest,

who had talked of haste, folded his arms and sat within the coving of the antique chimney; which delay, where there had been so much impatience, made Paolo say, (but always to himself,) "It is not for food to satisfy their hunger, but for the covering of night that these folks wait, or I am a fool, and can no longer spell faces;" to which comment he subjoined a smirk, that showed plainly how far removed he was from admitting so humbling a conclusion.

Suddenly his cogitations were interrupted by the appearance of something shadowy at the open window, and the sound of a gentle voice calling "Paolo."

"Ah! Dianora," cried the host, "what brings thee here, my child?"

"My mother," returned the same sweet voice, "sends back the pitcher, and wishes for more quinces, such as she had of you this morning."

At the same moment, a foot was heard ascending a stepping-stone placed beneath the window, and a fair childish figure looked in through the casement; and, resting a basket on the ledge, hastened to deposit the pitcher, which seemed too heavy for the head that carried it. Paolo would have assisted

her, and for that purpose laid down the lamp which he was about to place upon the table, so that its full glare was thrown upon the glowing face that leaned forward into the room, looking, in the rich frame-work of vine leaves that enclosed the window, like one of those breathing portraits, which strangers come to Italy to wonder at.

There was a quaint simplicity in Dianora's dress, curtailed as it was from some ample garment remaining to Monaca out of the wardrobe of better days, and fashioned without regard to modern notions, that contrasted charmingly with her young, joyous face and careless movements. Even the strangers were struck with admiration.

“ Beautiful,” said the elder gravely.

“ Most beautiful !” exclaimed the youth with ardour.

“ Ah, you have strangers here,” said Dianora in a frightened voice, and hastily descended from the stepping-stone ; then, when safe under the shadow of the wall, she stammered out, “ My mother will come herself for the quinces,” and was out of sight in an instant.

Now came fine scope for Paolo's loquaciousness ; and, without waiting to be questioned, he began to

recount how the worthy Monaca was herself a Lanfreduci, of a fallen, but honourable branch; how she had espoused the learned lawyer Andrea Capaccio of Pisa; and would have gone on through all her sad varieties of fortune, but that he was suddenly interrupted by a voice crying out loudly at the gate,

“Get thee up! Paolo Gabati; the soldiers are coming to search thy house.”

“How now, cousin Bartolo; what say’st thou?” exclaimed the host; “search my house! Come in, and we shall understand thee better.”

“None enter here alive!” said the elder stranger, planting himself firmly against the door. The younger grasped at something within his cloak.

“If you are disposed,” pursued the first, “to do a good act, and to profit by it, bar your door and give us time to escape. Here is my purse; it is weighty, nor shall my bounty, should occasion favour me, stop here. For this I pledge a word, which none have ever doubted. Should you admit my pursuers, your death is sure. Could you even escape from my hands, I leave those behind me who would avenge the treason.”

“Fly instantly!” cried Paolo, “I hear the tramp

of horses. Fly through the vineyard to the widow's house; there you may find shelter; none will suspect her."

The strangers fled, and Paolo had just time to throw the evidences of the supper behind a pile of faggots, when a troop of horsemen arrived at the gate, and knocking loudly, demanded admittance.

Meanwhile, the strangers had gained the porch of the widow's dwelling; and, rushing into the small chamber where she sat at work with Dianora beside her, told in a few words their imminent peril, and besought her to afford them the means of immediate concealment.

"Signors," said Monaca, somewhat startled at their request, "I am a lone widow, living here in solitude with this child. It may be that, in prudence, I ought to deny that for which you sue; but your need seems urgent, and God forbid that fear should master the better feeling of humanity. To this outer door there is neither bolt or lock, or other issue from it than through the dwelling of our neighbour Paolo; but there is the chamber in which I and my daughter sleep. It is possible that, as the door is of panel like the rest of the room, it may escape the notice of the soldiers, should they

come here in search of you. I do a fearful thing, if I conceal the guilty; but there is something in your look, sir, and in that of your companion, that reassures me. Pass in, and may Heaven be your safeguard."

There was no time for thanks. The strangers did as she had told them, and Monaca sat down with assumed calmness to her work; while Dianora, who had been a silent though deeply interested spectator of this short scene, placed her stool near to the panelled door, and setting her spinning-wheel before her, began to turn it thoughtfully.

"Hush! Dianora," said the widow, after a moment's pause, "I hear them coming: now, Heaven! give us courage. You are young, my child, and unused to such things; let not look or word betray you. Consider, that on our prudence depend the lives of two fellow-creatures."

"Fear nothing," replied Dianora firmly; "my heart is strong. I feel as though my father's spirit were here with us." The good Monaca sighed, but Dianora began to turn her wheel, as if she was anxiously finishing her evening task.

The soldiers entered without knock or parley. "You have criminals here," said he who seemed

their leader, "and we have authority to search your house."

"Search where you please, masters," replied Monaca, "you will find nothing. We harbour no criminals, and have no hiding-holes in our small dwelling."

"That we shall see," said the soldier sternly; and to work they went, overturning the old-fashioned furniture, thrusting their swords up the chimney, and displacing every thing but Dianora's wheel, which they plainly saw could not have contained a mouse. While thus employed, Monaca continued to work, and Dianora to sing, as thoughtless children may be allowed to do, even in anxious moments; and yet one who had watched her attentively, might have seen the colour come and go in her cheek, and her heart beating through the double folds of her kerchief.

The widow's dwelling consisted of three rooms; one in the centre, from which a door opened into the vineyard; another on the right hand, that served as a kitchen; and a third in which the fugitives were concealed. The door of this chamber and

that of the kitchen were opposite to each other, and both opened into the small parlour in which Monaca and her daughter were then sitting. At every stir of the soldiers, Dianora trembled, and prayed for assistance to all the saints in the calendar; but above all to the blessed Saint Petronilla, the eve of whose festival it happened to be, and for whose holy intercession she put up a very urgent and especial petition.

In the chamber within which the strangers were concealed, was a window so near the ground, that one who was no leaper, but had his wits about him, might with small effort reach it in safety. But then beneath the window was a narrow alley, enclosed at each side by a hedge of prickly evergreens, firm and impenetrable as a wall; to climb it was impossible, for in its even and closely knit surface was neither hold for hand or foot. A narrow gate, which Monaca always locked herself at nightfall, closed up the entrance: without the key, there was no chance of escape into the open country, and Dianora's heart sunk within her when she recollected that it had already been taken from the lock, and hung in its customary place over a cabinet, behind the door in her mother's chamber.

“ Ah ! ” thought she, “ if I could but tell them where it is ;—but I dare not speak. Poor souls ! they will surely be discovered. ” Then singing and praying all in a breath, suddenly a stanza of an old ditty in the patois of her native hills came into her head. Again she thought, “ O, if they could but understand me, it might save them ! ” Then gently moving her stool backwards, until her face almost touched the key-hole of the panelled door, she began to sing, in a clear voice and slowly, like one who tried by much exertion to keep herself awake, the ballad on which hung her only hope of saving the ill-fated strangers :—

My Lady Genevieve ! my Lady Genevieve !
 Why are you mourning ?
 Is it love you crave ? Your knight is true and brave,
 All others scorning.

My Lady Genevieve ! my Lady Genevieve !
 Foul plots are hatching ;
 Faith and love can save ; see, in yonder cave
 Your true knight 's watching.

My Lady Genevieve ! my Lady Genevieve !
 'Tis your lover 's praying ;
 Hall and bower leave, night and danger brave,
 List to what he 's saying.

Thus having, as she thought, excited their atten-

tion, and accustomed the soldiers to the humming of her voice, she changed the measure, singing in a lower tone, but more distinctly :—

Why sit you silent on the floor,
My beauty bright? Why sit you weeping?
The key is hung beside the door;
O lady fair! sad watch you're keeping.

The leap is low, the moon is bright,
Your true knight waits without to aid you;
The key is hanging in your sight,
Leap, lady, leap! and good saints speed you!

While she sang, repeating every line twice over, and turning her wheel languidly, the soldiers had visited every hole and corner in the kitchen, first having taken the precaution of stationing one of their party at the door to watch Monaca's movements, and prevent escape by the vineyard. Every thing was overturned, even to a pile of wood, which being heavy work, gave them some minutes' occupation, and as many of mortal anxiety to Monaca, who expected every moment to see the eyes of the sentinel fixed upon the panelled door. Dianora had still a hope, and contrived, while she sang, to put up mental prayers to all the holy women with whose saintly names her memory just then served her;

indeed, in the hurry of the moment, some were invoked who had no claims to the honours of the calendar, as that gentle girl of Verona, who, though loving enough for a saint, was only a martyr.

But she did not think of that ; her hope was, that some one of the holy phalanx might open the ears of the poor souls at the other side of the panel, to the jargon of her ballad. “ If,” said she inwardly, “ they are of the mountains, they will understand me.”

“ Ah,” thought Monaca, who perfectly comprehended her daughter’s meaning, “ it is a poor shift of thine, my child ; but Providence is all sufficient.”

Age, rendered timid by disappointment, doubts—pauses—trembles ; but youth thinks flying ; its hope is winged ; it does not lean upon an anchor rooted in the earth, but soars upwards, trusting to the broad pinion that cleaves its way where a feebler one dare not follow, and wins its wish by its undauntedness.

“ Honest Paolo is right,” said the foremost soldier as he re-entered the parlour ; “ not a mouse stirring. But you have a bird here, lady, who sings rarely ; a true nightingale, and one that

warbles in the rough company of soldiers, as if she were perched on the loneliest tree in the forest."

"My daughter," returned Monaca, "possesses the happy gaiety which becomes her age: God forbid that I should check her innocent cheerfulness. The time will come,—alas, too soon! when she will be silent and thoughtful as her mother."

"You are right, widow," said the soldier familiarly; "a light heart is better than gold. Better sing gaily like the ruddock on the bare thorn, than force a whistle to please those who hold you by a string, though it may be a silken one; and so farewell. We shall report to our employers that Madonna Monaca is an honest dame, and no secreter of malefactors."

"Not so," interrupted another, advancing fiercely; "your memory is somewhat deficient. You have forgotten to ask this gentlewoman where herself and her daughter sleep; we have seen neither couch nor resting-place, yet such there must be."

At this moment a slight movement, unheard by any one but Dianora, gave her the sad assurance that the room on which she kept guard was still tenanted. She turned pale, and looked towards her mother

“Gentlemen,” said Monaca, “my chamber is adjoining. If you will visit it, you are no doubt the masters, and may do so; but it seems strange that persons of your gallant profession should come thus to disturb the privacy of a lone woman, intruding upon her retirement, and creating alarm in the dwelling of the helpless and the inoffensive.”

“Madam,” replied the soldier roughly, “this parleying is of no avail; we must act. Where is the chamber in question?”

“A moment, sirs,” said Monaca, rising with dignity, and seeming to seek for the key, which she well knew was within the door. The delay was but short, too short for her anxiety, though much too long for the impatience of the surly soldiers. At length the door was opened. Dianora, pale and trembling, held fast by her mother’s arm, but neither moved: there was no sound. Monaca hesitated a moment, advanced a step, heard a soldier say in a calm tone, “Here is no trace of the men we seek,” and then putting on a bold mien, entered the chamber with her daughter.

The casement was open, but so are all casements in the cool evening of a sultry day: a soldier looked out, but not suspiciously, and lowering a lamp from

the window, saw by its glare the whole of the narrow and tenantless alley. While he did so, Dianora spied a glove lying on the floor, but so concealed by a curtain which had fallen over it, that it had escaped all eyes but her own anxious ones; hastily placing her foot upon it, she held it fast until the soldiers, having craved pardon in their rough fashion for the alarm their visit had occasioned, took their leave.

No sooner were they out of sight and sound, than Dianora burst into tears. Her mother kissed and praised her; but she who had a moment before helped by her ingenious courage to save two lives from imminent jeopardy, relapsed into the fearfulness of childhood, and trembled from head to foot.

“Cheer up, my Dianora,” said the widow, “you have done bravely. The holy Virgin, no doubt, prospered your endeavours.” And then she blessed her, and giving thanks to Heaven, went to bed with a heart lighter than it had been for many a day.

Nothing more came out, nor was a word said in the country that could throw a light upon this mysterious business. Paolo, after wasting some days in idle conjecture, and in praises of his own adroitness, which (as he himself averred) might—

but that he scorned so to use it—have got every thing out of the soldiers, seemed to have grown tired of the subject, or to have forgotten it altogether. But it lived in the memory of Dianora, and as the sequency of drops makes the rill, so did one recollection following quickly on another in long succession, produce the undivided stream of thought which at last filled up every chink of her mind ; and nothing occurring for a long time to interrupt the simple and uniform tenor of her life, or to weaken the only remarkable impression which external circumstances had ever made upon her, it became the treasure of her heart, the secret of her silent keeping. Never did she name the strangers ; yet seldom did she pass an hour without thinking of that mild September evening, when she sat, and sung, and turned her wheel before the panelled door, or let a day go by without drawing out the glove from the little bag of silk which she had made to keep it in, and admiring its soft material and cunning workmanship. It was a gentleman's glove all over—Paolo had assured her—and one that had never fitted working hand. And then came a proverb,—an old one, the good man said, but doubtless invented for the occasion ; he had

forgotten the rhyme, but the bearing of it was, that he who would judge the race of a damsel, must look well at her hand; but that a knight was known by the cut of his glove.

It happened, that about the time when Dianora had reached her sixteenth year, honest Paolo was summoned to attend the death-bed of a relative, one who had done him much service in his youth, and after whom he hoped to reap certain benefits, of great moment to one of his poor fortune. It was late in the evening of the fourth day from his departure, when he arrived at his own door.

“Welcome,” said his ancient housekeeper, “welcome, master. You must needs be weary after your long journey. Here is your seat; repose, while I prepare your supper.”

“Mother,” said Paolo, “I must not stop, till I have spoken with my neighbour Monaca.”

“But it is late. She is, no doubt, gone to rest, and may not be willing to open her door to you.”

“That we shall see,” rejoined Paolo, who, without farther parley, crossed the vineyard, and was in a moment at the door of the widow’s cottage.

She was still up and sitting at her work, just as she had been on the night when the strangers had craved her protection. Dianora, too, sat beside her,—the same Dianora, and yet another: the fair child had grown into the far fairer woman, in whose maidenly demeanour virtue spoke blushing, and in whose star-like eyes the noble courage which had distinguished the child, shone out in the bright setting of innocence and purity.

“Read on, my child,” said Monaca; “read that old ballad which your father loved. Better rhymes please me less than those simple ones that bring back the olden time, the yesterday of the heart.”

Dianora took up a book that lay open before her, and read from it:—

THE BOLD KNIGHT.

“Your heart is bold, your lady fair,
Your steed is neighing at the gate,
Your path is by the wild wolf’s lair,
And farther on the sea you’ll meet;
Away, sir knight!—your horse is fleet.”

The lady shed some silent tears,
Her cheek was pale, her soul was sad;
The bold knight chid her rising fears,
His heart beat high, his brow was glad,
Much love, but little dread, he had.

“ My fair, my gentle bride,” he said,
“ Why is the tear in thy sweet eye ?
We love not when such tears we shed ;
Thy father is mine enemy,
And yet from him thou griev’st to fly.

“ How is ’t my love ? Is thy heart cold ?
Or think’st thou of thy mother’s sorrow ?
Thy lady-mother would have sold
Thy hand to the proud lord to-morrow ;
Yet love’s first hour for tears you borrow.”

The gentle lady would have smil’d,
But that her heart wás far too griev’d ;
She was indeed a simple child,
And all he said, her ear believ’d ;
’Twas pity such should be deceiv’d.

The sea ran high, the bark rode on,
The lady gaz’d on the last tree
That mark’d her home :—it soon was gone,
And she was left alone to be
The saddest sight that eye could see.

They told me how her fair brow dimm’d,
And how her cheek grew sunk and pale ;
And how her heart with sorrow seem’d
To labour, and the sigh to steal,
Though nothing did her words reveal.

They told me how she dying lay,
And how her lady-mother came,
And would have chid, but could not say
The thing she meant ; the dying claim
Mercy from mothers’ hearts—not blame.

And soon the lovely lady slept
 The long, long sleep beneath the stone ;
 Perhaps the bold knight may have wept,—
 But more of him was never known
 'Till grass upon that grave had grown.

'T was said he woo'd some foreign fair
 Who loved him not as *she* had done ;
 And that he too was craz'd with care,
 And wist not to behold the sun,
 But all that look'd like joy would shun.

And once he sat upon the stone,
 The stone on which the hoar moss grew ;
 And one who pass'd could hear him moan,
 But what was in his heart none knew,—
 It might be shame for vows untrue.

But soon the grave had wider grown,
 And close beside that lady fair,
 Before another spring had blown,
 One came, her last lone couch to share ;
 'Twas the bold knight :—he's buried there.

“ The lady,” said Monaca, as Dianora closed the book, “ whose story makes the subject of these rhymes, was of your father's house, and the daughter of that bold captain, Ercole Capaccio, whose castle overlooked the Adriatic. He who lured her from her home was the renowned Hertzstein—Heart-of-stone, as he was well named ; one from beyond the Alps, who had done brave

service here in Italy in the time of the old wars, but whose faithlessness broke the heart of the young Gemma di Capaccio. A gentle lady it would seem she was, and exceeding fair, if the portrait which I have seen in my youth speaks true,—but hist ! some one calls without.”

“Worthy neighbour,” said Paolo, thrusting his head into the widow’s parlour, with the look of one full of a secret too big for his keeping, “I would whisper three words to you, just as many and no more. Now, I judge by your eye that you will say, ‘You are a late visitor, Paolo,’ and you would say truly; but when you have heard my story, you will soon see that I could not well have gone to bed without lightening my heart of its burthen.”

“But how is this!” exclaimed Monaca; “nothing anxious has, I trust, fallen on thee, good Paolo.”

“Not upon me,” replied the innkeeper; “but we will begin by the beginning, and then we shall see which way the wind drives. We have not talked much of late of those odd folks who surprised us here one blessed evening—it was the vigil of the immaculate Petronilla—and vanished, Dianora best knows how, while the soldiers searched for them

under the faggots. But you have not forgotten them, neither have I ; though till yesterday I had my doubts whether or not they were living men. Yesterday it was, and about noon, that as I jogged homewards sorrowful enough, after having shook the earth over my dear friend and relative Antonio Sarto, two men overtook me who were both bound, as I was myself, for the town of M——. I soon found by their talk that they were farmers from Annone, who were hastening forward to be present at the trial of two famous robbers, accused of the murder of a pious man,—a hermit, dwelling in the lonely mountains that stretch off beyond the monastery of the Holy Trinity. These fearful men had (they said) long been the terror of the country ; but since the eve of the Santa Petronilla, now gone by three years, at which time the murder was committed, nothing had been heard of them until a few weeks ago ; when one who had good reason to remember their features gave the alarm to justice, and they were seized, and brought with a double weight of irons upon them to M——, there to be tried for the alleged offence.

“ No sooner (continued Paolo) did I hear these men name the vigil of the holy Petronilla, than my

mind misgave me, and I determined to stop the night at the town, thereby to get—if such a thing might be,—a sight of the prisoners. This was easier than I had fancied. It was but waiting a while until their turn for exercise came, and then looking through a grated window, which any one might have done who minded not stretching his neck a little,—and there they were, bound hand to hand, walking up and down the prison court with the jailor at their heels; and proud enough they looked, more like two lions in their den, than like two sinners—as one may say—with the rope about their necks.

“I knew them at once, though the father is somewhat broken down, and the son—if he be indeed the son—graver and less comely than formerly; but for the soul of me I could not look at them without feeling my eyes twinkle, they stepped out so boldly, and looked so grand and fearless in their chains. So as I stood gazing with my heart in my throat, the thought suddenly struck me that they were innocent; and though the means of proving them so did not exactly come into my mind at the moment, yet I fancied that if we were all together, we might strike a light

that would bring them out of their darkness. And so hearing that the trial was not to come on till to-morrow at ten in the forenoon, I straight-way mounted my mule, and here I am, ready to return to the town with thee and this good child, if thou thinkest that by so doing we can save the lives of these men."

"This is a sad story," said Monaca, after a moment's pause; "and when I think of the lofty mien and graceful manners of these cavaliers, my heart travails for them in sorrow as thine does, neighbour. And yet I much fear, that in their case we can do but little good—"

"O, say not so, my mother," said Dianora earnestly; "you cannot believe them guilty. Do we not know by evidence almost as strong as proof, that they are innocent? Did they seem like murderers? and for gain, too!—robbers for money, as the paper which Paolo has given me sets them forth to be! O no! to kill a pious man for the sake of the small hoard of which casual charity had made him master,—who could have looked at them and think it? Not we, most certainly; and believing them guiltless, ought we not to declare our belief openly and boldly?"

Monaca loved the feeling which had converted the maidenly quiet of Dianora's habitual manner into warmth; it was a generous one, but she felt that the reasoning was that of a child.

"I believe as you do, my Dianora," she answered, "and am firmly convinced that these men are innocent; but alas! what can our belief do for them? how can our testimony help their cause? Is it not evident that, whatever may have been the nature of their offence, they were hunted as criminals whose deeds had rendered them amenable to justice? Must not we, if called upon, acknowledge that they came here as fugitives, pursued by the enforcers of the law?—and on the very same night when, as has since been proved, the murder was committed?"

Paolo's lip dropped, and he shook his head mournfully, looking with a blank eye upon Monaca as though he would have said: "Thou art a wise woman, and I am an ass." Dianora trembled, was silent for a moment; then took up the paper which Paolo had brought, and read in a shuddering internal voice the description of the robbers. It was true as a portrait—there was no mistaking it. Then turning it over and spelling every word with

the anxious scrutiny of that last hope which is just not despair, which looks for, without daring to reckon on, the slender possibility—the forlorn chance, the little all that certainty has not deprived it of, saw something that had before escaped her eye, approached it nearer to the lamp, burst into an hysteric laugh, and flung herself sobbing on her mother's bosom.

“Good news!” cried Paolo, tossing up his cap in the air. “I see it in her face: her young eyes have caught something that my old ones had passed over.”

“Mother,” said Dianora, “let us begone; we have no time to lose. If we would rescue these men from death, we must journey all night, and God will give us strength that we may arrive in time to save the innocent. Look here; this paper, as you will see, sets forth, that by explicit circumstances the murder is proved to have been committed between the ninth hour and the striking of the first quarter, at the distance of many leagues from hence; and you, my mother, cannot have forgotten—for you noted it to me afterwards—that when the first soldier entered here, he asked the hour, and that you, looking at the clock, replied,

‘It is not yet nine.’ And the same soldier, when he had passed the threshold to depart, turned round and said to me, who stood nearest to him, ‘Tell me once more the hour, my child, for I have forgotten what the padrona said it was.’ And I looked again at the clock, and answered, ‘It is striking the half hour.’—‘Ah, then, (said he,) we shall have enough to do, with whip and spur, to reach home by midnight; so foot to stirrup, and let’s be off.’”

“Dianora is right,” said the widow, “I remember it well. And now, my child, let us recommend ourselves to Heaven, and begin our journey; we are strong and used to fatigue, and have a great cause in hand, which must not be lost through fault of ours.” Monaca then set some refreshments before Paolo, who seasoned his meat with regrets that his mule was too weary to be of any use that night; which, it must in justice to him be said, was more on account of his companions than himself, for he was a good walker, and no churl of his pains in a rightful cause.

Small time was lost in preparation, and long before midnight the three were already some miles upon their road. Paolo knew all the mountain

passes, and could have groped his way blindfolded; but they had no darkness; the moon shone all night in the heavens, and when the first fires of day kindled on the tops of the mountains, she was still there in her pale loveliness.

For some hours they had walked on cheerily, stopping only at a deserted hut, the door of which stood open, for a short repose. As the morning broke, Dianora's hopes, which had begun to droop, revived again: the return of daylight, the song of early birds, the sight and fragrance of flowers, seemed sureties of success; even the trickle of the small mountain-falls, which but a little before, when night waned away greyly, seemed full of loneliness and like a voice of grief, now came on her ear with the freshness of a new-born sound, breathing hope and promise.

But at length Monaca's strength gave way, and though the mind helped out the body bravely, yet at last the weaker part yielded; and sinking down at the foot of a tree, she exclaimed,—“ I can go no farther. Alas! my feeble strength no longer seconds

my good intentions ; but hasten on, my Dianora ; there is no time to be lost, hasten on with Paolo ; leave me here to recover a little ; I shall speedily be well again, and shall rejoin thee when my strength returns.”

“Leave thee !” exclaimed Dianora, turning as white as ashes ; “leave thee, my mother ! and in this wild place alone ! to die, perhaps—to be murdered ! O, my dear mother, ask it not of me. Paolo will go, and we will stay here together.”

“No, my child,” replied Monaca firmly ; “the testimony of one, at least, of us is necessary. The sun is already high in the heavens ; it must be seven o’clock already, by the light ; at ten the trial begins, and there is no sign of the steeples of M—— in the long distance. Speed thee, my child ; thy presence of mind once before saved the lives of these falsely accused men ; take courage and finish the good work. I feel already better, and will soon follow thee.” But her voice grew fainter, as she spoke, and her cheek paler.

“Holy and blessed Virgin direct me !” cried Dianora, dropping on her knees beside her mother, and in that moment of trial even her courage failed.

“Holloa!” cried Paolo suddenly; “holloa, friend! which way are you going?”

“A league farther on the road to Triano,” replied a peasant, who, unseen by either Dianora or her mother, was following his cart slowly along a narrow lane, which seemed to fall into their path at the foot of the mountain. The peasant stopped.

“If you will give us the use of your cart to the next town,” cried Paolo, “we will reward you handsomely.”

The man desired nothing better than a good day’s work, without going out of his way for it; so making a short cut up the hill, he helped Paolo to carry Monaca down to the spot where the cart was stationed, and deposit her in a comfortable corner. Dianora then sprang in lightly, and Paolo having placed himself beside her, they were soon jogging on at a brisk pace along the road to M——.

“Lord have mercy upon us!” cried Paolo dolefully, as they passed under the walls of a monastery; “does not the great clock strike?”

Dianora, who had already counted the strokes silently, replied: “Alas, it does! But yonder is the town; all may not yet be over.”

The town was however farther off than it seemed

to be; another hour passed; and fear, from being questioning and communicative, had sunk into silence; but every thing has an end—even suspense, and it was reached at last. But O, how cruel did every little delay, every momentary obstruction seem to their impatience! How dread gained upon them, as increasing crowds retarded their approach. At length the streets were cleared, the mass of people penetrated, the hall of justice gained, and Monaca, restored to strength, stood with Dianora by her side, and Paolo near to them, on the steps of the trial chamber.

There was a fearful press, and a dead silence; those who were behind raised themselves on the points of their feet, to gain a peep over the heads of the luckier ones who stood before them. The stillness frightened Dianora; but presently there was a reproving murmur growing loud and angry as it rose and strengthened, and several persons passed, saying, “They are judged.”

“Judged and condemned,” said one, who struggled to get out, “and to my thinking, most unjustly.”

“True,” said another; “but they would do nothing for themselves. There they stood mute as

fishes ; nor could they in any way account for their time on that same night when Ruberto saw them, as he swears, enter the cell of the hermit."

"Ay, there was the rub, as Marco Mattei said ; could they have done that, they had been saved."

"Gentlemen," said Monaca, "make way, I beseech you, for those who come from afar to speak for the innocent. Let us have room, good sirs : we are here on no idle errand, but have full means to prove the truth of that which we advance. If there be justice here in Piedmont, let it not be denied to us. Is it because that we are strangers and unknown, that we should be deemed unworthy of a hearing ? Has justice favourites ?"

The crowd gave way, and Monaca, followed by her two companions, soon stood beside the judgment-seat, and in full view of the prisoners ; who, having received sentence of death, prepared to meet their fate with the courage of Christians, and of men strong in innocence. Monaca was the first to speak.

"Hear me, my lord," she said. "These men are guiltless."

"Woman !" returned the judge, interrupting her sternly, "they have been lawfully condemned.

Seek not, by unavailing clamour, to turn their minds from the high concerns which at this awful moment should absorb them wholly. At noon they die; and you would idly bend their thoughts from Heaven by your unwise conceits, uprooting the staff of divine hope, to plant in its stead the feeble reed of earthly delusion."

"Not so, my lord," said Monaca respectfully, but with firmness; "that which I say is no delusion. These men now before you are as guiltless of the crime for which they are condemned to suffer, as the child unborn; and we are come—myself, my daughter, and my neighbour Paolo Gabati—to testify by our most solemn oaths to their innocence, and to swear upon this holy symbol," (pressing to her lips a crucifix which was placed upon the table,) "that on the eve of the festival of Saint Petronilla, and at the very hour of nine, when the murder is proved to have been committed, these cavaliers were in my house, that house being in a village distant many leagues from the spot on which the foul and grievous deed of which they stand accused, was done."

"Words," said the judge gravely, and as if touched by the earnestness of Monaca's appeal, and the air of genuine dignity manifest in her deport-

ment, "are worth but little, unless strengthened by proof. Here we have evidence so clear, as to be, to all appearance, unanswerable; and from it we learn, that the prisoners were seen disguised in the neighbourhood of the hermit's dwelling a few hours before the perpetration of the crime; and likewise obtain proof that the deed was done by two men, the one young and the other of middle age; proof, also, that two persons, to whose description the condemned exactly answer, were seen to enter the hermitage as the ninth hour struck; and yet further testimony, that the prisoners now before us were observed by many, two days after the fatal one, lurking in the caverns of the sea-shore, and finally embarking at Montonotte in an infirm and ill-managed skiff, and at such imminent risk, that nothing but a life at stake could have induced men of sound mind to peril it. There all clue to their course was lost, and for nearly three years nothing more was heard of them; when he who had observed them hovering round the dwelling of the pious Anselmo, on the morning of that day which closed his mortal career, came again upon their traces; and with the help of others, surprised, overpowered, and gave them up to justice. And what have they alleged

in their behalf? Nothing! Has not truth a tongue? and yet, instead of boldly asserting their innocence, at least by speech, as the tamest will do even on light occasions when calumniated, they have confined themselves to a blank and unrepeatd denial, and then taken refuge in the perversity of silence."

"Say rather, signor," interrupted Monaca, "in the dignity of innocence, which disdains to vindicate itself. Hear me, my lord; you are there to administer justice, and I am here to speak truth."

"And who are you that speak thus boldly?" demanded the judge.

"A widow of poor fortune, but of unspotted name, and whose testimony will be upheld, if need there should be, by those among whom she has lived for many years."

"And your name?"

"Monaca Capaccio, the widow of Andrea."

"What! the renowned lawyer of Pisa?"

"The same."

"And the young girl who bears you company?"

"Is his daughter. Hearing last night by our neighbour Paolo Gabati, that the lives of these strangers were in jeopardy, and knowing them innocent, we have come on foot from our distant village to speak the truth, which we are prepared to prove;

and to make solemn oath, that on the very night and hour when the murder was committed, these men were in my house, as is well known to our companion Paolo Gabati, and also to four others who had remarked them as they passed under his gateway, and who are ready to testify to the same, if time be allowed to bring them forward. He who believed that he saw them enter the hermitage at the ninth hour, must have been deceived by the darkness; for that night there was no moon, and the light of day had long passed away from the heavens. The murderers, it would appear, carried no lantern, neither did he who observed them; how then could he mark their features so closely as to recognise them at once, after an absence of three years?"

Monaca paused as if for a reply, but the judge answered by a question:—"Had these men been known to you before that evening?"

"No, my lord."

"Being strangers, how came they to your house?"

"For a temporary shelter."

The question "Under what circumstances?" seemed inevitable, and Monaca shuddered inwardly; but the mind of the inquirer was pre-occupied by another idea. "Did you on that evening remain long in conversation with them?"

“Not more than a few minutes.”

“And you have never seen them since?”

“Never, until this day.”

“Yet you, madam, have no hesitation in identifying the persons thus casually seen, with the prisoners now before us; though it would seem that the means which so short an interview afforded of fixing their features on your memory, were scarcely more favourable than those which, when brought forward by another witness, you called in question. Search your mind well: have you no doubt existing as to their identity?”

“No more than that the light which now beams upon us is that of day,” said Monaca, with solemn energy.

“Madam,” said the judge respectfully, and after a moment’s thought, “we will receive your testimony with meet attention, giving due weight to the name you bear; but we have great strength of evidence opposed to your mere word, and further proof that these men were the actual persons who on the vigil of Saint Petronilla visited your house, it would seem that you have not.”

“My lord,” said Dianora timidly, “I have a glove;” and then drawing from her bosom the small

silken bag which she always carried about her, took from it the treasure that for three whole years had been enclosed within it. "I found this glove," she continued, while her cheek grew red, and her bright eyes, cast on the ground, seemed to hide themselves beneath their modest lids, "on the floor, after the departure of these cavaliers from our house. Providence, no doubt, inspired me to preserve it, that it might serve as a witness for them." And when she said this, she looked upwards, and an expression almost celestial settled on her features.

"Francesco Forresti," said the judge, addressing himself as if by instinct to the younger prisoner, "describe the glove which you wore on that evening, when the widow of Andrea Capaccio received you (as she avers) into her house."

"I can do better than describe it, my lord," replied the prisoner calmly; "here is the exact match of that which you hold in your hand. I have borne it always about me since the night on which I lost its fellow." So speaking, the youth produced a glove, the very counterpart of the one which Diadora had taken from her bosom.

A shout of joy burst through the hall. Those who were near, threw up their hats; others cried,

“ It is the finger of Providence.” Many would have kissed the hands of the widow and her daughter; and while the old blessed them, the young looked at Dianora, and some amongst them said,— “ It surely is an angel, sent from heaven; nothing mortal ever looked as she does.” In the mean time, the judge put many questions to Monaca and her companions, and receiving always the same clear and collected answers without flaw or prevarication, and having likewise found amongst the persons gathered round, many honourable vouchers for the unimpeachable veracity of the lawyer’s widow, gave orders that the prisoners should be set at liberty, which was immediately done; and while they looked round anxiously for a sight of their deliverers, Monaca with her daughter and their companion stole out through a private passage, and hid themselves from the crowd in the house of an honest tradesman, with whom Paolo had sometimes lodged.

Another hour had scarcely passed, before a person came to the door, who inquired for Monaca;

and having delivered into her hands a letter, sat down within the porch to wait her answer. The letter was from the elder cavalier, and thus, after the accustomed greetings, it continued:—

“ Twice have we owed to you, and to that fair creature your most dear daughter, not only life, but preservation from the ignominy of a felon’s death. It is now time that you should know for whom your generous courage has been so nobly exercised: to another, before making this all-involving discovery, I should speak of secrecy; but to one of your fine sense and high honour such caution would be idle, if not offensive. I am that Galeazzo di Monza, whom some call patriot and others traitor; who, feeling bitterly the degradation of his country, risked all to rescue her from bondage, and failed in the attempt. For this, a price is set upon my head, and I am hunted by the minions of injustice like a beast of prey. For this I was pursued, driven from my covert; and while the blood-hounds hung upon my very flanks, and the death of the base seemed to me inevitable, then were we rescued, sheltered, saved—by your intrepid benevolence, and the ready wit of your noble-minded child.

“After nearly three years of melancholy exile, exposed to the inflictions of pity, the obloquy of ill success, a heart-felt claim—the desire of a dying wife—brought me again near to my native country. I was arrested on its threshold, and with my son, whom devotion to the good cause had involved in my ill fortune, dragged to prison under the horrible imputation of murder. In this obscure spot none know the Monza; and seeing this, I and my son resolved to die unwhitened from the awful accusation, rather than by declaring ourselves, wilfully inculpate those, whose concurrence in our views might have been thus, fatally for themselves, demonstrated. Hence our stubborn silence,—ascribed, and not unnaturally, to guilt; hence our steady refusal to call in evidence to our innocence. As yet curiosity—violently excited by immediate events, has not taken breath to inquire who we are; but few hours will pass ere the cry will be—‘If these men are not the murderers, who then are they?’ We must fly; but not without those whose truth and courage have been to us as the angel’s hand that shut up the mouths of the lions.

“I am a plain soldier, and will speak frankly. My son loves your daughter; and, if my eyes de-

ceive me not, your daughter loves my son. Nor need she blush to do so, for a nobler heart than his never yet beat in mortal bosom. In his fine nature, the rough spirit of his ancestors, though unsubdued, is bettered into a gentler manliness; he will protect her with a soldier's arm, and love her with a lover's heart,—a passionate heart, and already of proved constancy. From that memorable evening, when your Dianora's dawning beauty, acute wit, and most becoming modesty, heightened my son's gratitude into a feeling not often inspired by one of her tender years, he has preserved that glove which found to-day—so happily—its fellow, often saying:—
'Should she chance to light upon the lost one, and keep it in remembrance of an evening, not perhaps unmarked in the calendar of her innocent remembrances, it may, if we ever meet again, make us known to those, whose sense and spirit saved us from destruction.' And now his sole hope is to make her his wife, if she herself be willing, and that you, respected lady, will consent to give her to a banished man. We are sure of an asylum in a free and happy country, and of the means of honourable existence in it; but of small value will they be, unless you, madam, and your fair daughter consent to

share them with us. Your Dianora is fitted by her courage and her constancy to be an exile's wife ; and if there lives a man who would not find even the grief of banishment assuaged by such fair society, that man is not Ippolito di Monza.

“ Having thus spoken freely, and with the full hope that after having done so much for us, you will not leave the good work unfinished, I will add, that we are now in the monastery of the Santa Croce, a mile from the city as you quit it by the Pilgrim's Gate ; the prior is my old and devoted friend, and if you, most honoured lady, will with your daughter come as far as the entrance of the town to meet those who, but for the dread of awakening attention and the danger of consequent discovery, would have been themselves the bearers of their petition, we will conduct you where this holy man will join their hands, whose hearts, or I am much mistaken, have long been faithfully united.”

Few words will tell the sequel. Before many hours had gone by, the blushing Dianora stood beside Ippolito di Monza in the chapel of the Santa

Croce. At dusk on the same evening, the exiles, and those two who were willingly bound up in fate with them, were far on their way to that fair land, which opens its gates to those who cannot live in an enslaved one ; and Paolo Gabati, with a well-stored purse tucked within his doublet, was jogging leisurely homewards on a sleek mule, which the prior of Santa Croce had bestowed upon him with his benison.



THE
KING'S DAUGHTER.



THE KING'S DAUGHTER.



There was a bit of heaven in his room,—a sun-beam
to shine into a corner of his heart.

Leigh Hunt.

This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green sward: nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place.

Winter's Tale.

THERE is something very taking in a mystery,—
so at least thought the inhabitants of Oriana, when
they congregated at the church-door, and forgot
even their macaroni to gossip over the only event
of romantic interest which had happened in the
village for many a day.

It was a very romantic village, too; but scenes
and stories do not always go together, except in
the fancy of the poet, and the men of Oriana were
simple vine-dressers, who, less learned than the
Venetian gondolieri, had never heard of Tasso;

and if in former times the shepherds had strolled about with their lutes, or the peasants—like those of Empoli*—chaunted the verses of Ariosto, they had long since abandoned such high strains, for the rude and sorrowful song with which alone the fields and vineyards of Italy are now familiar.

In fact, they were honest husbandmen and nothing more; with wives to match them, who twisted up their hair with bodkins, and covered their sleeves with bows, and their bosoms with every possible insignia of the Catholic faith wrought out of ivory, coral, silver, and sometimes gold; and when Sunday came, threw a white veil over all and looked like the Marys and Elizabeths of the old painters, who took nature as she presented herself to them familiarly, and transplanted her at once to their canvas, without giving her time to curl her hair, or shake out her draperies.

Nothing amongst the people of Italy becomes obsolete because it is antique, and both the men and women of Oriana might have passed for the models of those venerable or innocent groupes, which the ancient limner could with cunning skill throw out from his gilt ground or suspended per-

* Vide Montaigne.

spective. Their country, too, would have looked well through one of those square openings in a chamber, or colonnaded vestibule, which the Giotto and Orcagna, and their great disciples, delighted in. For their sky was oftenest of a deep and yet bright blue, and their trees—such as grew about in their fields and vineyards,—sparingly placed, but of stately and eastern aspect, so that two or three together told like a whole grove of more ordinary quality. But I had begun to say something of the good folks of Oriana, and want to say something more; therefore, for the present, I shall leave the place to itself—looking like a village in Palestine, according to the idea of Raphael and others—and perhaps return to it again in some by-and-by moment.

According to the supposed standard of Italian morals, the Orianites were black swans. Their strong chamber,—for it could not be called a jail, was always empty; grass grew upon its very threshold, nor was the eye offended by the barred windows that make Italian cottages look like prisons—recalling the idea of crime by their defensive aspect. As few travellers visited this unpretending spot, it was not worth the mother's

while to breed up her children to the begging profession, which is the general bent of the private tuition system in Italian villages; so when any chance-sent wanderer did pass their doors, the youngers merely looked at them through the long sunburnt hair that fell into their eyes and half blinded them, without thinking of bawling out, “Carità, Eccellenza!—Eccellenza, carità!” as is usually done in more refined parts of the country, capitals and all,—and not only by idle brats, but by hale adults of both sexes.

But these good people had their weaknesses, like the rest of mankind, and curiosity was (at the period of which I write) decidedly one of them. Indeed to such a height had it arrived, that the very Sunday before that on which my story begins, the curate had addressed his flock from the pulpit, in a few words of reprehension delivered after the sermon, telling them that though a desire to know all good things was wise and praiseworthy, yet that an idle yearning to pry into the affairs of others was the sure sign of emptiness.

In the middle of the piazza,—every village in Italy has its piazza,—stood a church, amazingly fine without, being painted in all imaginable colours,

and having, moreover, a portico supported by twisted columns of Giallo Antico, which seemed to grow out of the backs of a row of dire and most unholy chimera; but within,—for truth must be spoken,—neither in splendour or cleanliness did it resemble St. Peter's at Rome, which is the lawn-sleeve of ecclesiastical dignity, being the dressiest thing in its way extant.

Perhaps I should not have used the word *dressy*; it is a frippery and unsubstantial word, and not (I fear) suitable to the splendour and importance, the magnitude and beauty, of that prodigious temple, in whose shining niches we almost look for the statue of the Olympian Jove, or the Diana of Ephesus. In saying this, I do not mean to decry the Hebrew pomp with which the rites of Christianity are there wrought over; but I love the forest-architecture of the old Christian churches, and prefer the long and hollow perspective of the interlaced arches to the house of gold, or even—if it be not wrong to say so—to the purple and scarlet, the “chapters of silver, and the pillars filleted with silver,” of the tabernacle of testimony itself.

Our church of Oriana was raw and gloomy, with

something of a tawdry theatre about it, and nothing of the high equipage of piety in which the churches of Italy glorify. When such things are not sublime, or at least magnificent, they are sure to be paltry, and few things could be more so than the church of San Panteleone. It smelt neither of myrrh or aloes, nor of any thing else that had to do with ivory palaces. Before the great door was hung, as is the custom in finer places in Italy, a greasy mat; and all the idle ones of the village used to sprawl, or sit, or kneel before or behind it, from cock-crow to nightfall; when one of the holy officials, or his deputy, made his appearance, swept off the rabble with a fierce scowl, and locked up the sanctuary till the next morning.

It happened, one evening, just at the Ave Maria—the most poetical hour in the Italian calendar, and the only one which reconciles an unaccustomed ear to the fashion of counting the day by four-and-twenty,—that a woman whose black silk veil and dark mantle had nothing in common with the white mezzaro and flaunting jackets of the Orianites, stood within the porch of the church, waiting for the hour of vespers. A child was by her side, hidden under her long

mantle,—that is, as far as head and body went ; for the slender legs and tiny feet, indifferently shod in half worn-out sandals, were visible beneath the ample garment.

At length the bell tolled, and the good folks, pushing up to the high altar, would have kept off all intruders, and especially the woman in the dark mantle, for whom (being a stranger) they had no toleration. Not that they lacked the virtue of hospitality any more than others of their nation, who, to speak fairly, are no churls, and seldom wanting in kind ways and gentle services ; but that a certain overlooking air, which might have been put up with in one of their own folk, offended them in an intruder. But she, little disposed to consult their feelings, moved loftily through the crowd ; and making her way,—not so much by arms and elbows as by dignity of deportment, placed herself at the very railing, and setting the child on her knees before her, arranged herself decorously for the work of prayer. But a gossip who stood near to her, and whose place she had usurped, frowned fiercely, and asked in a jeering tone if the young monkey was a king's daughter, that she should be set up, as it were, upon the altar ?

To which the other answered gravely, "It may be that thou hast said it," and straightway went to work with her rosary, as if nothing had happened; but long before the pious women had finished the long list of petitions which each had to make to her own particular saint, the brown cloak and its contents had vanished.

At length the church was cleared, the priest unrobed, and the yellow-flowered vestment and antique point-lace laid by for future occasions. The curate,—a kind man as ever the sun shone upon, took leave of his flock, with a good night to one and a good wish to another, and turning up the green path that led through the vineyards to his cottage, fell into a reverie, which had probably some project of benevolence or pious intention for its subject.

Be that as it may, the good priest was no prophet, and little thought of what awaited him at his return; or that under the lime-tree growing before his door, he should see a child of three years old— or thereabouts—fast asleep on a bed of wild thyme, with one hand across its eyes and the other full of flowers, which fell gently from its half-relaxed fingers.

The curate recoiled in amazement; then beckoned his ancient housekeeper, the worthy Gioconda,—a special soul and well fitted in a name, for never had true piety and genuine benevolence worn a more cheerful form: she immediately recognised the child to be the same which the strange woman had held under her long mantle, but the wonder was, why it should be there.

In the midst of many conjectures, all ending just where they had begun, the babe awoke; and opening a pair of large black eyes that had a mixture of heaven and earth in them, called for its mother, first in a tone of joy, then of terror, and at last of agony, that quite unmanned the curate, and brought the ready drops into the grey orbs of the tender-hearted Gioconda. No mother was however to be found, and the child remembered nothing more than having been carried into the church by her unnatural parent,—the woman of the mantle,—who had probably taken means to secure for her charge the blessing of a gentle slumber.

It was now too late to seek further; the child was cold and hungry, so Gioconda took her in her arms, held her before the brasier, warmed

her feet, listened to her patiently while she first roared, then sobbed, and then frowned, pushing out her lips, and refusing the food which she was dying to eat; till by dint of tenderness and good humour the dame prevailed, and the froward thing allowed itself to be comforted, partly by the figs and minestra, and partly by the adroit consolations of the worthy housekeeper.

At length came bed time, and with it a fresh storm; but at last sleep conquered, and Gioconda, who already felt happy at having something younger than herself to take care of, cheerfully began the exercise of her new functions, and set about wrapping up her charge as loving children do their first bird, but with better success than usually attends their cradling; for the little girl was alive and merry the next morning, whereas wool and flannel generally terminate the poor bird's sufferings long before day-break.

From that time the dignified gentlewoman in the brown mantle was never heard of at Oriana; the child got used to its new friends, and they

became fondly attached to their new care. Father Nicolas did think, at first, of placing her under the care of some pious nuns in the neighbourhood; but Gioconda, who doated on the little creature, quickly set him right as to his duties, and soon convinced him, that a deposit entrusted to his care by Providence, should not be carelessly made over to another. And thus was Giulietta,—for so they had made out her name to be, permanently installed as pet and plaything of the curate's cottage.

It was evident from the child's manner, that she had seen finer things than even the priest's parlour, for nothing astonished her, not even the *Salutation*, though magnificent in ultramarine and scarlet, which hung over his easy chair; nor yet the chair itself, though covered with crimson leather flowered with gold, and not above forty years in use. She complained, too, that the cup from which she drank was thick and heavy; and was once out of Gioconda's good graces for nearly five minutes for saucily oversetting her breakfast, because the porringer in which it was offered to her had some sooty marks upon it. It seemed, too, as if she had been waited on by persons of

different countries, for she would often call authoritatively, and in good Italian, for her dear Assunta, and then gabble and cry for some other nurse or playfellow in a rougher tongue.

Notwithstanding these indications of delicacy and care, the clothes which she had worn on the evening of the brown mantle apparition were of the plainest kind, somewhat coarse, too, for so dainty a lady's wear, and indicating nothing beyond decent mediocrity. Gioconda locked them up carefully, regretting, while she did so, that neither in their make or texture was there any thing to confirm, even in the slightest degree, the high notions which she loved to indulge on the subject of *Giulietta's* descent, for her vanity would have made a princess of her; but her heart gave her a much dearer title, and having nothing else particularly to attach itself to, settled its whole hoard of affection upon the little god-send. Nor was the curate, though less demonstrative, a whit behind hand with her in the work of love; and so between them *Giulietta* was nursed and cherished like a tender flower,—over cherished, perhaps, as tender flowers sometimes are,—and then comes an

unmannerly wind, and plays at scythes with their unresisting blossoms.

In the village she went by the name of *The King's Daughter*, for the women had not forgotten the answer which the stranger in the brown mantle had given to the gossip's taunt; but some, when they saw her skip, and run, and vault, and make nothing of leaps that would have scared half the boys in the village, suggested that she—or rather her parents—had belonged to some troop of ambulating rope-dancers, an idea which seemed reasonable enough to many, and was rather strengthened by her possession of what seemed to these good people the gift of tongues.

“It's as clear as daylight,” said one, who had been to Milan in her youth. “I remember well the tumbling folks that crossed the ferry with us, and no two of them could speak the same tongue; one was a Bergamese, a gay varlet, with a black eye and a bold forehead; but his little wife was fair, with golden locks, and talked in her throat, so that none except her husband knew what she was saying. They had a baby, too, which may, for aught I know, be this very one,”—a *may be*

placed by most of the hearers amongst the probabilities, though the passage of the ferry-boat bore a date at least fifteen years prior to the birth of *Giulietta*. But on this subject, faith was like wax,—open to all impressions, and the discussion usually closed with a rub at the mother, who (as *Maria Grazia*, the flax-dresser, used to say) was something like the huge ostrich bird that her nephew had seen in foreign parts,—any one might hatch her eggs.

It was an odd education that of *Giulietta*: the priest had taught her to read, to learn her catechism, to repeat her prayers, and to sing. He was himself no mean musician, played on the bass viol, loved *Corelli*, sang through his nose, but in good tune, and had skill enough to instruct his pupil to do better than he did himself. *Giulietta* possessed a contralto of surpassing sweetness,—perhaps no quality of voice is so touching as the woman's tenor heard in its beauty; there is a spring in the clear and pure soprano that lifts up the mind,—it seems to us like the voice of angels, but of happy ones; while in the deeper tenor is a clinging of the earthly heart, an outpouring of pro-

found and sorrowing tenderness, of human feeling, that brings it down to the tone of sympathy. There is something affectingly mysterious in such a voice, it seems less like the natural one of woman, than like another which grief has given her.

Giulietta's was of this beautiful kind ; there was a mine of sadness in it, which the rich gaiety of her character made doubly touching : and when she sang for the good father those sacred melodies he most delighted in, he would often say, that the *Miserere* which he had heard in his youth in the Pope's own chapel at Rome, was cold work to it. The rest of her education was confided to Gioconda, who taught her to sew and spin, of each a little, and to make herself useful about sundry household matters.

I cannot take upon me to say that there was but one opinion about her beauty ; on the contrary, there certainly were dissentients. Some thought her complexion too brown, and that her eyes were too large, and her mouth, though opening finely, a degree perhaps too wide ; others that her eyebrows, though soft and regular, lacked of the even arch, and did not exactly divide the forehead ; and

many, indeed all the young girls of Oriana, called her too tall, at least by a hand.

There were some, however, and amongst them Gioconda, who considered her as a perfect specimen of female loveliness. Her eyes, they said, were like stars, and had the light of heaven in them; her lips were as fresh as rosebuds, her throat like a swan's, and her step fleet as that of the wild deer. The curate himself was fond of saying that he loved to read the book of innocence in Giulietta's face, and that her sweet and unworldly aspect made him think of those pure and pious virgins, whose chaste looks have been known to disarm the fury of the most ferocious animals.

But it little mattered who was right, or who was wrong. Giulietta sewed or spun, ran wild in the vineyards, or sang canticles in the church; and when she had set half the old women of the village against her by her childish tricks, conciliated them as speedily by her droll attempts at contrition, and invincible good humour.

Three-fourths of the young men of Oriana, of such I mean as dared to look so high, were her devoted suitors. The intendant's son, the doctor's

nephew, the young student who lodged with the old German captain opposite to the church, and some dozen others, improvised the praises of her charms from such love-lays as they knew were not likely to have made part of her studies, striking their foreheads for the inspiration, which burst out in the form of a sonnet of Petrarch, or a verse of Tasso. Not that she ever looked their way, or was guilty of civility to any one of them ; indeed, the males of the village were very low in her good graces, with the exception of Giacomo Pozzi, a poor youth lame from his birth, and who supported a sick mother by his ingenuity. He had a cunning hand, and made nets for the hair, and wove chains of beads and other glittering things, with which the lasses of Oriana decorated themselves until they sparkled and shone like Our Lady of Loretto herself. When Giulietta's fête-day came, Giacomo never failed to present her with a net of coloured silk, in which a few threads of gold were mingled ; Giulietta paid back the gift by innumerable kindnesses, and often on gay occasions, when the veil might be decently dispensed with, gathered up her redundant hair within its slight confine-

ment, and twisting a few flowers into the meshes, would wear it with a grace so becoming, that many a court lady would have given her finest aigrette and solitaire to have looked as she did in Giacomo's handy work.

The curate saw that she was happy, and rejoiced at it, but felt that it could not always go on thus. He was growing old, and should he be called away, what was to become of her? She was no more fit to be left alone in the world than a new-born babe, and still less to be made a nun of: this he could see with half an eye, though none of the keenest in such matters. The natural wish of his heart was to see her honourably and happily married, but in hers there was no respondent. In the mean time, offers poured in from all quarters, for *Giulietta* was not only the handsomest maiden in the whole country, but likewise a sort of an heiress, for the curate was accounted rich, and *Gioconda* too had her savings; and, as she often took care to observe, "neither chick nor child, no one but *Giulietta* to come in for all." This subject was often on the good father's lips, and he would sometimes talk approvingly of the young farmer

who owned the fair land of milk and honey at the other side of the vineyards, and whose teeming fields and goodly kine never failed to call forth Gioconda's admiration, as his harvest procession did that of Father Nicolas. It was strictly classical, (he used to say,) waggons, oxen, and lading, whether of ripe corn or of bursting grapes, and he seldom saw it pass without a quotation from Virgil, who, after the fathers of the church, (to whom, as in duty bound, he gave the preference,) was his favourite author.

He often talked (as I have said) of this good youth, and of another still wealthier, whose father had traded in pork in a town some miles distant until his coffers overflowed, and then had made himself lord of a naked-looking villa, or—as some called it—castle, a little way out of the village. The son had far outshot his father, as sons nowadays are apt to do; for he curled his whiskers fiercely, had discarded lamb's wool, and tacked a sable collar to his mantello; disclaimed all knowledge of salsiccie or mortadelli, and even forswore the very swine themselves, who had so often contributed, with limbs and life, to bring about the

epoch of his present grandeur. But for the parish register, he would have called himself *Don*,—Don Camillo, and would have sworn by the blood of his ancestors; but Giulietta had no ancestors, at least none that she knew of, so he did not lose much in her opinion by being in the same predicament, but prodigiously by being a simpleton, which she had good reason to know that he was.

In short, she would not hear of either. Diana herself was not more obdurate, and far less consistent; and when the curate talked to her on such subjects, she would laugh, or cry, snatch off his cap and hang it on her own bright ringlets, or kneel upon his footstool, and vow that she would stay and nurse him all his life, whether he would or not; and then a gentle rebuke, and sometimes a tear or two, ended the controversy.

But Gioconda was not so easily put off. Whenever a wedding took place at Oriana, she was sure to pout. It broke her heart, she said, to see that Giulietta, who could pick and choose, suffered all the young maidens of Oriana to go before her. It was very well for children to run after butterflies, and take off their shoes and stockings to dance in

the running stream, (these were amongst Giulietta's favourite amusements); but girls of eighteen should think of settling themselves, and when rich suitors came wooing to them, should not jeer, and stop their ears, and run away as if the parish-beadle was after them.

Do what one will, 'the hind feet of the stag will never overtake the fore ones.' Gioconda thought this, or something like it, when she reflected on the prudent education she had given to Giulietta, and how her wild nature still run a-head of it. "Ah, (she would say,) blood is breeding, and I fear poor Giulietta's mother was no storer up of winter comforts. Well, people must be as God makes them, and no doubt it is all for the best, as he has so willed it;" and then she would bow her head devoutly, and grow gay again; nor was hope ever long absent—that hard-billed bird, that finds picking every where.

"Hush, dear Gioconda," said Giulietta one day that the provident housekeeper had been giving her a lecture; "you don't know what I dreamt of last night."

"Pr'ythee, child, hold thy peace; thy dreams

are no better than fairy tales. Give me more sense, and less invention."

"Nay, you are cross, dear mother; but you must hear me, nevertheless. Ah, now that I have got hold of your hands, you cannot stop your ears with your fingers."

"Well, if I must, I must; but be brief, my honey-bird, for it is time that I should draw my cake from the oven, and set the table before the father comes."

"O, as for that, my dream is told in two words. Last night, I thought—that is, I dreamt, of the white-haired old lord in the fine coat, whom, I am quite sure, I remember carrying me about in his arms, though you, dear Gioconda, say it is impossible, and that children of three years old have as little memory as conscience; but whether it be, or be not fancy, last night I walked with him in a garden full of buds and flowers,—and in my dream I knew the garden, I remembered it,—but how you frown upon me, mother; why do you look so angry?"

"A pretty question truly," retorted the dame. "Why, art thou not fancying thyself the king's daughter?"

“Or the rope dancer’s,” said Giulietta gravely, and with a sudden blush.

“Heaven only knows!” replied Gioconda with gentleness, for her wrath seldom lasted more than a minute. “But be that as it may, thou shalt never want a parent’s care while I am here to love and guard thee.”

Not many days after this baby-dream of Giulietta’s, news came to the village of the approach of a great prince, who was coming to live in the neighbourhood; and while the idlers were gossiping about it, down came a host of fiddlers, scene-painters, and other court mummers, who preceded the great man. This prince, whose dominions were at the other side of the Alps, and who had been ordered by his physicians to try the renovating air of the orange and lemon groves, that bloomed like the sunny side of the apple at the back of his snow-mountains, had lately made himself master of a fine castle within bow-shot of Oriana, and came to take possession of it, with the pomp and equipage which suited his high station.

The whole population turned out to stare at him as he passed with his gallant falconers in green and gold, and his handsome pages in blue and silver, and the court ladies in fine carriages, and the cavaliers on fine horses, and all the retinue of a pageant till then unknown at Oriana, whose occasional splendours had hitherto been supplied from the resources of San Panteleone. But on that day, the villagers were taught the difference between Santa Lucia's tin crown and gilt paper stomacher, and the real silver and gold, brocaded into the very seams of the waiting gentlemen's garments.—What that knowledge cost them is another question.

I have said that all ran out to see the procession, and of course Giulietta with the rest: in a moment she was perched on the top of a wall, and stood clinging to a broken column with the shape and air of one of those exquisite nymphs of antiquity who visited poets in their dreams, and coquetted with the pagan divinities. It chanced to be a holiday, and the green net with its golden tracery was placed somewhat upon one side of the head, while a few fresh vine-leaves were twisted among the long black tresses that fell negligently from beneath it.

Every one who has visited Italy knows, that there is no lack of finery in the holiday-dress of an Italian peasant, nor of taste either. *Giulietta's* black velvet boddice was as fine as gold and silver thread and *Gioconda's* handy work could make it; no girl, far or near, wore such fresh and fine white sleeves, or such ample bows on her shoulders; the short scarlet petticoat, too, was magnificently bordered round with stripes of many colours, and the narrow white silk apron richly fringed; all, in short, to the very shoe strings, was as effective as the curate's indulgence, *Gioconda's* industry, and *Giulietta's* taste could make it.

Just as the carriage in which the court ladies were placed, came opposite to the wall where *Giulietta* had perched herself, some trifling accident impeded the procession. The fine vehicle drew up close to her, and while she admired the ladies, and the horses, and the liveries, and had not eyes enough for all, the high dames were calling to their cavaliers, and pointing their attention to the beautiful peasant, who held fast by her column, and little knew what fine things were said of her by the *Glorianas* of the drawing-room.

Not so Gioconda, who, mounted upon a stone at the bottom of the wall, soon saw which way the eyes were turned, and tried to make known the same by winks, nods, hems, coughs, and other signs of acknowledged significancy. At length Giuletta comprehended what Gioconda had long laboured to make her sensible of, and perceived, to her utter dismay, that all the bright eyes and cooperating glasses were turned upon her. In a moment her face, throat, bosom, were covered with blushes. She imagined herself an object of derision; and suddenly springing backwards from a height which would have startled some of the gay equestrians who bent their bold gaze upon her, dashed, like an Atalanta, through the bushes, and never took breath till she found herself safely lodged within the paternal shelter of the curate's arm-chair.

It was a moment of wounded pride,—of mortification such as a sensitive mind feels when suspicious of being an object of ridicule; the sting is poignant, the venom humiliating, but in young minds—perhaps I should rather say in young vanities,—there is a healthful property that heals by

the first intention. Long before Gioconda had returned home, probably before she had missed Giulietta, the light-hearted maiden was sitting by the well-side in the small garden which she called her own, and out-singing the little birds who were used to her music and never heeded it, except when they grew ambitious, and stretching their pretty throats would fain emulate the liquid melody of her full and sweetly cadenced notes.

This well was her darling spot. Four pillars supported its roof of vines, four healthy plants, of deep green leaves and bright tube-like blossoms, grew up from their base, and flung their lavish garlands from one to the other. The rock behind was matted with the close foliage and graceful flowers of the caper, the open spaces bordered with low growing things sweet of hue and scent, that seemed worked into the earth; roses grew high and wild wherever they found support, and so did the large white convolvulus that bound their sweet boughs together. The well itself was of antique form and hoary colouring; water-plants had grown upon its surface, and lichens curiously figured the grey stone and its rude sculptures; and as

one sat upon the rustic seat beside it, a verdant pergola freshly carpeted with a narrow stripe of grass, led the eye through its close vista to two quaint flower-knots, thick set with sweets, and rich in bloom and fragrance.

Garden scenery in Italy, be its scale large or diminutive, is, if not overrun by ruin and the weeds that follow it, effacing symmetry and trailing their lavish beauty over its unerring lines, rarely otherwise than formal. These patches of bright embroidery were like the rest; but the eye wandered over them, not unrefreshed, and dropped into the gentle valley that gave its name to the village,—the green valley whose meadows were irrigated by unseen currents of clear water, fed by a mountain-stream which the neighbourly Alps had sent circling through their flowery herbage,—the valley where the sun set, and the fresh chesnut woods that grew upwards from its fields protracted lovingly its last and most beautiful lights.

How sweet it was at evening, when the airy and feathered trees that fringed the summits of the hills showed the sunbeams through their gauzy leaves; for at that hour their solid texture seemed almost

transparent, and the yellow light came to the eye as through a film; while the quiet heaven and the motionless earth beneath it were so clear, so still, that the village dwellings looked as if they were painted on the hills, and the hills upon the heavens.

By the well-side (as I have already said) sat *Giulietta*, when the housekeeper returned blazing, agitated, and breathless, fanning herself and motioning to her charge, as she bustled towards the pergola, and wondering to find her keeping company with the birds, and singing like one of them, with the same happy but unelated look that she had worn the evening before.

But all *Gioconda's* movements were lost (like the nods and winks of the morning) on *Giulietta*, whose head happened to be turned the other way; and while, exhausted more by emotion than bodily fatigue, the good woman sat down to rest for a moment on a bench at some distance from the well, the sweet notes of her pet nightingale came down to her through a screen of flowers, with the words of a pleasant air that she loved to hear her sing floating on them:—

GIULIETTA'S SONG.

Tell me, my pretty bird, where do you come from,
 Who tied the azure thread round your bright neck ?
 Is the green rose-bush your shelter, your lov'd home,
 Or does your nest the red almond-tree deck ?
 Blue is your soft breast,
 Purple your bright crest,
 And your wide wings are all crimson and gold :
 Soft from your full throat
 Gushes love's own note,
 But your dark eye is both wayward and bold.

Tell me, my mocking bird, where are you come from,
 Where is the bow'r you once cheer'd with your song ?
 Is it for love, or for change, that you thus roam,
 Gay bird, and idle one, floating along ?
 What scented island,
 Palm-grove or gold strand,
 Call'd you its glory, its joy, its plum'd king ?
 Borne, like a light leaf,
 O'er rocks and o'er reef,
 Whence comes the perfume shook out from your wing ?

Tell me, my roving bird, where do you come from,
 Where's the fair lady that made you so fine ?
 Is she not pining all silent and lonesome,
 While her gay beauty-bird fain would be mine ?
 Gold threads and azure,
 Love without measure,
 All kinds of treasure were thine wouldst thou stay ;
 But too much petting,
 Brings on forgetting,
 And this is the moral, my bird, of thy lay.

GIULIETTA'S SONG.

VOCE.

PIANO
FORTE.

Tell me my pret-ty bird, where do you
come from, Who tied the azure thread round your bright
neck? Is the green rose bush your shel-ter, your
lov'd home, Or does your nest the red almond tree deck?

The musical score consists of four systems. Each system includes a vocal line (VOCE) and a piano accompaniment (PIANO FORTE). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Blue is your soft breast, Purple your bright crest;

And your wide wings are all crimson and gold.

Soft from your full throat Gushes love's own note,

But your dark eye is both wayward and bold.

So warbled *Giulietta*; but *Gioconda* had other things to think of besides beauty-birds. Her song was a fairy tale, with all the necessary ingredients,—from the young prince down to the gilt coach and “pretty page,”—and her wonder was, that *Giulietta* turned a deaf ear to it.

Nothing was talked of that night at the duke's table but the beautiful villager. No matter what had been thought of her large eyes and her long eye-brows at *Oriana*; at the castle they were pronounced perfect, and to have a nearer view of so fair a creature the young prince proposed that the theatre should be immediately put in order, and what the French call *tableaux* got up for the purpose of drawing her to the show, or if possible making her an actor in it. In the mean time, an emissary was despatched to the village to learn who and what she was, and the Prince *Rudolphe*, who was just twenty-two, and had not been what is called in love above three times, mused himself to sleep after a full hour's tossing, and dreamt till morning of green nets and taffeta aprons.

—II.—

Duke William of Herpsberg was a gracious sovereign, whose dukedom afforded sufficient room for three magnificent palaces, besides divers hunting-seats and pleasure-houses. Within his dominions were three towns of some size, with hot springs and theatres, redoutes and picture-galleries, museums, public gardens, and perhaps as many means of wasting time—or enjoying it, as mightier sovereigns possess within their palmy capitals; and though a traveller may breakfast at one extremity of his dominions, and arrive in good time for dinner at the other, yet there is enough upon the road to amuse the idler, and delay the curious.

He was, in short, what strangers call a petty prince, and his subjects a powerful—no, that is not the word,—an enlightened sovereign, which in the German residencies means sometimes, though not always, (witness SaxeWeimar and others,) a prince who loves and patronises music, boasts of his orchestra, is politically influenced by the counsels of his prime-minister, or high chamberlain's wife—perhaps by the prima donna; and if he be warlike, looks to pinched waists and stuffed craws as infal-

lible indications of a martial spirit. Duke William loved music, and did not altogether despise the influence of beauty; but he was a discreet man, and more than that, a good one, with high sentiments of honour, much urbanity, and some instruction, yet with little force of character, and proud as German princes usually are before they have dissolved into philanthropists, or learned the lesson of philosophy which has lately forced its way into the class-book of sovereigns.

The prince, his nephew, was a handsome youth—magnificent the ladies said—with more of ardour than of industry, better acquainted with Goëthe and Schiller than with Kantz and Leibnitz, but frank and manly, with a charming indifference to self, and a mind strongly influenced by certain romantic tendencies, which led him to seek for poetry in the homespun events of ordinary life, and fancy it sometimes where nothing announced to common eyes its probable existence. He had this faculty, it was said, from his father,—certainly not from his mother, the Princess Herminia. It seemed indeed to have been born with him, for though a wild, he had been a dreaming child, gay and abstracted by turns; and though manhood

found him pre-eminent in all the accomplishments becoming his station,—brave, noble, gallant, and sometimes giddy, yet the dreamy and idealizing spirit was still there. He read little, mused less, for what handsome young prince of twenty-two has time to do either? but though unfostered by artificial means, it was always there, colouring the common-place of life with its deep-drawn hues, its inborn and marvellous radiance. His was a delightful nature, kind, open, genial; free to give, careless of return, with a clear sound vision that took in at once the beautiful whole, and overlooked the vexatious minutiae which distract narrower attentions, like a gallant vessel that cuts straight through the broad waves, and throws the froth behind her.

In nothing, unless it might be in beauty, (though hers was of an entirely different character,) did Rudolphe resemble his mother, who was the only sister of the duke. The Princess Herminia was a woman shrewdly organized, famed for her worldly wisdom and court breeding, for her contempt of low birth and indulgence for high vices, and above all for her perfect and enduring beauty. At forty-two she preserved the shape of a goddess,

and almost the freshness of a nymph ; her features were absolutely faultless, her countenance passionless but sweet : it was an unchanging and somewhat studied sweetness, yet it passed on the multitude, and when her beauty was spoken of, the word *celestial* was in general requisition.

But I have brought her forward before her time, for she was still at Herpsberg, being one of those outwardly languid and placid natures who love to drop into ready-made comforts, and to inhale the perfume of flowers planted by other hands than their own. When the chateau had assumed an inhabited appearance, and the saloons were duly impregnated with the true court odour ; when the theatre had been gilt and draperied into elegance, and the players were in readiness ; then it was presumed that the princess would take the reins of government into her own hands, and dispense the balm and honey of her favours among the minor pleiades—the court constellations, who borrowed whatever they had of lustre from her effulgence.

Gioconda never heard of a prince without fancying that he might perhaps be the father of Giulietta, and it was not till she had carefully conned over every page of Duke William's private history, which

the tenaciousness of memory, undiverted by other incidents, had registered in the gossip's note-book, and of which its possessors—the old servants and hangers-on of the family—were ready circulators, that she could bring herself to give up the wild idea that had crossed her brain on hearing of his arrival. Indeed, after having witnessed the admiration with which the first view of Giulietta had inspired him, nothing but instinct, the truth of instinct, the miraculous power of instinct, was in her head, or on her lips.

“Certainly,” said she one day to the curate, “the instinct of nature is marvellous. Children have been enabled by it to point out the murderers of their parents, and parents to recognise their long-lost children.”

“Gioconda,” replied the father gravely, “nothing is impossible to an all-directing Providence, and what we call instinct, is doubtless an instrument of divine wisdom in the consummation of its high designs; but such things baffle our dim scrutiny, and obvious means and ends are the resting-places on which ignorance willingly reposes. Here, however, is no question of internal evidence; but simply, as it seems to me, of admiration, naturally enough

excited by the unexpected appearance of so fair a maiden as our *Giulietta*."

"It may be so," replied *Gioconda*, "for it is not every day's sun that brings to light such eyes as hers are; and as Duke William never had a child, of course *Giulietta* cannot well be his. Well! she is worthy of a good father, and a fair mother too; but Heaven grant that none of those tumbling people, that fill up every cranny of the castle, may claim her: holy Mary keep that trouble from us! It's odd enough, but whenever my head cools about kings, and so on, these rambling vagabonds come across my mind; and I can't get the better of the notion, that if she does not belong to the eagle, she may to the jay,—and there ends my castle-building."

"She probably belongs to neither," said the curate thoughtfully. "Some unhappy person,"—then, suddenly checking himself, he added,—“but we are all in the dark, and our conjectures are at best useless. Let us then be satisfied with the blessing which Providence has given us in our dear *Giulietta*, without prying into causes which are (doubtless for wise reasons) hidden from us."

I am not quite sure that the curate's rebuke

would have silenced Gioconda, who was no great respecter of persons, and moreover loved the last word, had not the sight of two mounted cavaliers, who turned their horses' heads towards Father Nicolas's dwelling, given another direction to her eloquence.

“Bless me!” she cried, “if here are not two gallants riding up through the vineyards. Look, father: as I am a sinful woman, 'tis Prince Rudolphe himself,—the duke's own nephew! and no doubt some other of the mighties that rides beside him,—and I such a figure! If I could but stick on a breast-knot and a pair of clean sleeves,—and, bless me! no fresh flowers gathered to-day, and you in your old night-gown, and an ounce of snuff upon your collar! *Giulietta!* I say, *Giulietta!* Run quickly; here comes the prince. Tie on your flowered apron, and run the new bodkins—the silver filigree—through your hair. O, if it had but been Sunday, when we are all ranged and seemly, as becomes the priest's family,—but that's always the way; when we are in *querpo* none come, and now this unlucky Friday! *Giulietta!* I say, *Giulietta!* What a child it is,—deaf as a post, or out with the birds, I warrant ye!”

But *Giulietta*, who had heard nothing of the bustle, was slowly coming up a narrow grass path, hidden from the windows of the curate's parlour by the vines which grew about it, with a basket of grapes on her head, and the every-day apron of black silk gathered up in her hand, and filled with fresh roses.

"Here I am, dear mother," she said, as she stepped in at the low parlour-window, "and here are roses for you: are they not beautiful? And these hyacinths,—the duke himself has not finer. But I shall ask *Pietro* to give me a root or two of his tulips, for they get on better than mine." Then seeing *Gioconda* looking terrified, she added,—
"What! you think that the duke mayn't fancy it? Ah, dear *Gioconda*,"—waving her hand archly—
"you know nothing of princes."

At this moment *Rudolphe*, who had entered the room a moment before her, approached with one of those compliments of every day wear, which courtiers—even when they are thinkers too—are in the habit of addressing to town grisettes or the fair lawn-aproned abigails of the back staircase; a something about cheeks fresher than roses, enviable and too highly-favoured tulips, and other gallantries of the madrigal kind. But her thunderstruck

air at once arrested his fluent common-place ; and before he could pick up the scattered pearls of his discourse, or go from the cheek to the eye, or slip in a word about Venus or her tire-women, *Giulietta* had recovered from her fright, and re-assumed the air of innocent dignity which was natural to her, and which silenced the florid nothings of the young prince sooner and more effectually than the frown of a court beauty had ever done.

He was not, it is true, much used to frowns ; and when they were bent upon him, took them, much as he did smiles—carelessly enough, as signs signifying nothing, and convertible at will into tokens of softer augury. But the modest blush with which *Giulietta* turned from his intense gaze, and the proud air of her averted head, whose fine upright yet retreating position manifested—not the shamefaced feeling of vulgar and easily overcome bashfulness, but the innate principle of modesty, awed the young prince into respect, and almost into timidity. He certainly attempted no more compliments that evening ; his manners were affable and polite, without being condescending. No handsome woman ever forgives condescension, at least its outward and visible signs ; the art of an adroit suitor is to

make her whom he admires feel that she is raised to his level, not that he has lowered himself to hers. Rudolphe's mission was to prepare the way for Giulietta's visit to the castle, by inviting the curate, on the part of the duke his uncle, to dinner on the following day. It was a mark of deference for his cloth, the good man thought, and so believed himself obliged to accept with respect an invitation, which he would have joyfully declined had his code of politeness furnished him with an excuse for so doing.

At length he departed, leaving the most favourable impression on the minds of the simple trio: the priest was gratified, Gioconda bewildered, and Giulietta more pleased than she chose to appear; for disguise is twin-born with that first feeling of preference which we call love, though it is only the path that leads to it; and she who had never feigned before, and scarcely knew that she did so now, found herself denying his undeniable beauty, disputing the indisputable sweetness of his voice, and spelling him backwards, as a witch is said to do a Pater-noster; until Gioconda, shocked at her want of taste, flounced out of the room indignantly, little thinking how flowers may bloom though the cold

snow covers them, as those who have gathered the blue gentian in the dim valleys of the Alps, where it gleams amidst the snows like a bright sapphire shrined in silver, can testify.

To-morrow came at the usual time, and great were the preparations made for the curate's toilette by both his handmaids. It was perfect: never did his mild and venerable figure appear to more advantage, and as he slowly ascended the hill which led to the castle, Giulietta, who stood at the wicker gate looking after him, remarked in the pride of her heart, that if good looks made bishops, he would have been one long ago.

The duke received the priest—as a proud man, and even an overbearing one, usually receives another whose station is immeasurably beneath his own,—with the most encouraging affability: it is only against those who approach the great man's level, that his quills rise. The ladies took their tone from the duke, and were deliciously courteous—quite good creatures, who talked with interest of the crops, and the vintage, and the wants of the

church, until the simple curate, who had never before come in contact with court ladies, felt as much at his ease as if he had been listening to *Giulietta's* gossip in his own parlour.

This is one of the secrets of high breeding; vulgar folks, who wish to make those whom they consider as their inferiors *comfortable*, regularly begin by showing their 'vantage ground' before they venture to step from it. Such people cannot *afford* to come down until they have proved their right to the high seat, and then it is too late; for proud spirits have had time to take offence, and timid ones to take fright, and so their affability goes for nothing, or something worse than nothing. But indisputable persons do not *venture*, but *proffer* urbanity, (I mean when it suits them to do so,) certain that should their courteousness be misunderstood or presumed upon, they have but to intrench themselves an inch or two behind their hereditary ramparts, and the poor intruders who are left outside are soon made sensible of the difference between right and sufferance. The dames of the castle had a point to gain, and were charming; and the simple soul, who had wisely determined that *Giulietta* should never make her

appearance amongst them, ended by promising to present her to the excellent ladies on the following day.

To be brief, she was presented; and the ladies were so charmed with her naïveté, her ignorance, and her costume, and the gentlemen with her grace and beauty, that it was found impossible to pass a day without her. Then came the discovery of her voice, and of her wit, which was pronounced admirable, and of her fine tact, a quality altogether aristocratical, but natural in Giulietta as her bloom or her gaiety.

“It is really extraordinary!” exclaimed the old Countess Valdemar, who dictated in the absence of the Princess Herminia. “Where can this girl have acquired such notions of good breeding?”

“Probably from delicacy of feeling,” said Rudolphe, “from an innate sense of propriety.”

“All that sounds well,” returned the countess, “but feeling will not teach forms.”

Rudolphe, perhaps, thought otherwise.

“And how many worthy people,” she continued, “do we meet with, who think all sorts of right things, and yet are for ever offending by coarseness and impropriety; while this girl—it is really mar-

vellous—says and does every thing that comes into her head with a grace so charming, that all others are turned by it.”

“And the hands and feet!” exclaimed the old Count Bulow, “*les extrémités fines!* Never did satin slipper or soft glove enclose any thing more delicately patrician.”

“It is an especial organization,” returned the countess, “a downright defiance to established rules. Did you observe, this morning, when the duke offered her the bouquet, which he had just before refused to the Princess Constantia, how she blushed and stepped back two paces in an attitude of grateful denial; and when the duke insisted, how she took a single rose, and that the least beautiful, and placed it in her bosom with the expression of one who felt the distinction to be unmerited, but who accepted it with respect—not as a tribute, but as an act of kindness? A common nature would have taught the duke his duty by handing it over to the princess, or perhaps have received it with conscious triumph; but from the turn which she gave to this delicate matter, it seemed merely a mark of benevolence on his part,—a finger held out to the humblest of the company

to raise her a little to the level of the rest. In short, her tact is perfect, it is absolutely courtly."

Thus did *Giulietta* sail before the wind, the general pet of the duke and the ladies, and the rustic divinity of the courtiers: but what was she to *Rudolphe*, and *Rudolphe* to her, before a few short weeks had elapsed? All and every thing. And yet no words but those of common import had passed between them; no vows, no protestations; nothing but a look interpreted by sympathy, or a word pronounced before others, a common word, but translatable into eloquence with the help of love's glossary. And thus had they settled it all in their hearts; and as *Giulietta* knew nothing of the distinctions of rank, and *Rudolphe* thought nothing about them, they dreamt on, rocking themselves in the soft cradle of their new-born feelings, and forgetting that there might be a future frowning on them in the distance.

Happy, happy hours of early love! bright days by which we guess of paradise! new hearts and fond ones! What is the delirium of ambition, the bubble of glory, to your dream of dreams? How quickly does the heart answer,—nothing! But the dreamers—who count on an eternity of delight,

and little think how soon the present becomes the past,—poor dupes! to whom the woods, the skies, the flowers, tell tales of happiness which the world refutes,—coldly, perhaps cruelly,—but always too late.

Just at this period, when the rugged earth seemed in Giulietta's eyes to be covered with the flowers of paradise, when a footstep in the gallery, a sound under her window, a figure passing in the distance, made heaven in her heart, arrived the princess. Giulietta was at the castle, and it happened that her highness descended from her carriage just at the moment when the story of Clari, thrown into living pictures, was about to be represented. Ever kind and gracious, she insisted that no hindrance should be opposed to the performance by her presence; and as her benign wishes were as absolute as the sternest commands, the curtain rose as usual. Giulietta was the Clari, and though she had never seen a theatrical representation, or even a very clever picture, yet her fine natural taste, correct perception, grace, and feeling, more than made up for the want of early cultivation.

The princess expressed her approval in her own beautiful calm way. She even went beyond it; and when Clari, faint and way-worn, reaches at last the bourn of her mournful pilgrimage, and kneeling before the home of her happy days stretches out her arms towards it, exclaimed, "How fine and sorrowful! Nothing of the mechanism of grief, no solicitude of sympathy or admiration; all deep, careless, concentrated, as if sorrow lived alone in the heart!" And then she looked as if she too had a heart, and smiled so beautifully on Giulietta, that the poor maiden could have almost knelt down and worshipped her.

That night Giulietta was to sleep at home, which she now did but seldom; for the great ladies, having coaxed the curate to give up his wise resolution of keeping her out of their way, had little difficulty in prevailing on him to spare her to their frequent wishes. But it was Saturday evening, and nothing, not even the desire of the princess herself, could have induced her to pass the Sunday away from the good father and her dear Gioconda.

"And now that she is gone," said the fair and placid Herminia, "tell me who is this beautiful,

singular creature? She is certainly a new species. I never saw any thing in the least like her; nothing of the legitimate mint, nothing of the court fac-similes, and yet so graceful, so piquante, that one pardons her originality. Let her be sent for to-morrow; she must be exceedingly amusing. But who is she? Is she commandable?"

"What!" exclaimed the duke, "have you not heard of *the King's Daughter*?"

"Or the rope-dancer's?" added the Princess Constantia, with bitterness.

Her serene highness professed ignorance, and half a dozen voices opened at once; but the Countess Valdemar commanded silence, and placing herself on a stool close to the sofa on which the princess reclined, made her highness mistress in five minutes of *Giulietta's* story.

The princess was surprised, and somewhat shocked, and not a little vexed to have been betrayed into a waste of worse than unprofitable admiration. She had supposed *Giulietta* the daughter of some neighbouring noble,—a decayed branch perhaps, but of an old tree; she had even read it in the patrician turn of her head. But a chance bantling! a something picked up under a

lime-tree! It was well to see a creature of that kind in her proper sphere, at a village festival, or a Sunday merry-making, or to hear her sing in the vestibule when their high mightinesses were at table; but to be brought into familiar contact with any thing so ignoble, was not to be endured by a princess of the house of Herpsberg.

“And yet,” said Rudolphe, “even the house of Herpsberg might be proud of possessing such a jewel.”

The princess cast a rapid glance over the features of her son, and something like a smile accompanied the quick inspection. When this illustrious actress was violently agitated, she always smiled; she did so now, and her lips grew pale as they lengthened ironically; but it was only the spasm of a moment, and before the eye could seize its meaning, it had shifted to the benign expression which habitually masked the workings of her mind.

From the famous “bouquet de plumes de coq et de paon,” down to the single quill of Mephistopheles, the bad spirits have always been addicted to feathers. They are a significant ornament; but in the bright Herminia's obsequious circle, no eye

had leisure to remark the nervous quiver of her highness's travelling plume, or at least no tongue made comment on it.

But who could comment, who could understand *her*? She seemed beyond the influence of human passions, because she was beyond the detection of human sagacity. She was ambitious, might be jealous—false—vengeful; but the world did not fathom it, none looked beyond the barrier of appearances, and that was starred with flowers of a thousand hues. She had no sympathy but with herself; her own pains, her own plots, her own successes were felt, worked out, rejoiced in with concentrated intensesness; self was the live spot in her heart, but with the feelings of others hers held no kindred.

The fête was over, the lamps extinguished, the maids of honour retired to their niches, the prince to his window—it was a lover's moonlight,—from which he could discern the tall chimnies of the curate's cottage; and the duke, whose custom it was to read for an hour or so after he had dis-

missed his attendants, had enveloped himself in a night-gown of Indian silk, and was seated thoughtfully, with some grave author before him, at a table on which lights were burning brightly.

Towards midnight a German imagination always busies itself about supernatural concerns,—at least it is so said. The duke was thinking of one who did not appear at his bidding, though she had long taken out her title to the shroud and casket,—and ghostly visitors (they say) will come if called for,—when a gentle footstep was heard approaching along the gallery on which his apartment opened. The duke listened: it passed on, returned, stopped at the door of his chamber, seemed to pause an instant, and then three low knocks were slowly given against the panel of the door.

The duke heard the mysterious number and started. “Good God!” he exclaimed, in a smothered accent. The knock was repeated. “Enter,” said the duke, in a more confirmed tone, “even though thou be——” The door opened while the name was yet on his lips: it was the princess.

“I am come to talk with you, my brother,” said she, in a tone of gentle reproach, “about the young

person who has been introduced—unguardedly as it appears to me—into your society. But,” she added, with an air of surprise, “how scared you look! What, brother, did you fancy me a ghost?”

“I know not,” replied the duke gravely, “what I may have fancied; my studies, as you see,” and he pointed to a large volume which lay unclasped before him, “concern nothing of this world. This is the eleventh of September!”

The princess changed colour; but quickly recovering herself, took the duke's hand, and pressing it within her own, said in a gentle voice, “Think not of that, my William; nor prayer, nor grief, nor study, can recall the dead.”

“It is for that I grieve,” replied the duke. “Could I by prayer, or grief, or study, bring that back which you well remember, I might again be happy.”

“Speak not thus, my brother,” said Herminia, placing herself on a chair beside him, and putting on that sweet smile that looked so heartfelt, “speak not thus. Forget for a few moments the sad occupation of your lonely hours, and give me your attention in a matter which, as it touches not only

the affections of our hearts but the honour of our house, should interest you deeply."

The duke leant forward in token of attention.

"I have chosen this hour," she continued, "as being the only one in which we can confer together unremarked. It is an unauthorized hour,—I know it; but from many observations which I have made this evening, I feel that there is not a moment to be lost, if we would save a weak and romantic boy from the danger of an absorbing passion and its degrading, perhaps fatal results. *Giulietta*—"

The duke started: the idea that the hereditary prince should have conceived a passion for a peasant girl, never once crossed his mind. His first movement was to treat the suggestion with contempt; but he well knew his sister's keen discernment, and as she went on developing the apparently slight, but to her mind strong grounds on which her apprehensions were based, his mind opened gradually to suspicion.

"You may be right," he said, "for you are rarely otherwise; yet it can only be a transient homage paid to beauty; a boyish fancy, such as once led him to Prague in pursuit of *La Romanelli*."

“La Romanelli!” repeated the princess. “O, what a dream is yours! Look at Giulietta, and then say if she is fitted to be thus loved.”

“But,” said the duke, “Rudolphe is proud; the blood of those more noble than the kings of Europe runs through his veins. A man thus born flies nobler game.”

“Not always,” replied the princess with a marked expression.

The duke looked displeased; a shade gathered on his brow. “Not that,” he said, “not that—speak not of that,” and his voice was stern and agitated.

“I did but speak, dear brother,” returned Herminia, in her most soothing tone, “to justify my fears. Forgive me, if I have said too much; forgive a mother whose heart trembles for the safety of her child. You, too, must see the danger,—the probable consequences.”

“Allowed: but the remedy?”

“Immediate separation: Rudolphe must depart, and speedily. In this enervating country, where the very air breathes poetry and passion, a soul like Rudolphe’s easily forgets the claims of society in the intoxication of romance; and that peasant

beauty who, under a northern sky, would look raw and frost-bitten, catches the rich colouring of her climate, and becomes identified, in his imagination, with the beautiful nature in the midst of which he first beheld her. The girl," she added, forgetting what she had just said, "is nothing remarkable; but she twists flowers in her hair, and wears sandals, and contrives to look classical in the slight drapery and graceful veil, which is all that the climate requires. Our country girls of Herpsberg, in their thick coatings of druggot, are not divinities; and Rudolphe fancies Giulietta one, because, though in the same class of life, she is so unlike them."

"True, sister," replied the duke, after a moment's thought, "you reason wisely; and though the girl appears to me to be singularly beautiful, and to have something in her air and manner which though unpatented may well be called noble, yet—"

"All that you say, brother," interrupted the princess, "goes to strengthen my argument. The more beautiful she is, the more is she dangerous; and the flexibility of a southern capacity, its power of seeming, its quick perception of advantages, its instinct of artifice,—you frown, you think me

harsh:—well, then, suppose her all that she appears to be, all that you believe her, it is but admitting, but placing in a stronger point of view, the absolute necessity of immediate separation. You find her fair—”

“Yes,” interrupted the duke earnestly, “fair almost as yourself, and of a conduct so engaging, that I, to whom Providence has denied the blessing of offspring, cannot behold her without wishing that Heaven had given me such a daughter.”

Here the conversation took a melancholy turn, and the princess, playing adroitly on the excited feelings and enfeebled mind of her brother, procured his consent to the departure of her son, and even a command that Rudolphe should set out for a distant country on the following week.

The Sunday passed, and Giulietta made her appearance, as she had promised to do, at the castle. The duke received her with a sort of assumed coldness, through which individual admiration broke out at intervals. The princess was in her mood of dignity, all the aristocracy of her nature was in

action ; and taking a false view of the character of her son, (the most dexterous overshoot the mark sometimes,) she unwisely imagined, that to weaken his attachment, she should begin by lowering its object. Nice tacticians have often employed this mode of attack with success ; but applied to Rudolphe, it failed completely.

Love is the Palestine of the young imagination, the Holy Land of the new heart, which it feels itself bound to protect against the assaults of those fierce Saracens, Pride and Power ; and every attempt at invasion endears the contended ground, and animates the valour which defends it.

Giulietta perceived at once, that she was not greeted with the usual smiles and courtesies. The princess coldly turned her back upon her, with a look which said as plainly as words could have done, "What does she do here?" The acquiescent ladies followed the bright example, and, I am ashamed to say, so did the men also. The Princess Constantia became purple with the animating sensation of gratified malice ; others would have pitied Giulietta had she looked sneakingly, or been humiliated into ugliness : but as her embarrassment increased, her colour brightened, her quivering lip

grew redder, and she became so insufferably beautiful, that a tacit agreement to look her down seemed spontaneously formed, and put in action with the most pitiless celerity.

The duke was evidently distressed; he tried to laugh, to talk loud, to appear occupied with those around him; he wished to have, at least, looked kindly on *Giulietta*; but his sister's eyes pursued him,—her calm blue eyes, that never looked more soft and skyey than at that moment. O, those eyes! those eyes! that borrow the language of heaven, and utter curses in it: the terrible ones, that boldly look daggers while the hands use them, are honester, safer, better,—out and out better, than those false orbs; their light is like the eternal day which at certain seasons prevails in northern latitudes; the sun is always there, even when we feel that it ought to be night, and its light seeming unnatural, becomes hideous.

The duke felt this for the first time, but had not strength to rebel against the tyranny of habit. He looked away from *Giulietta*; she observed his embarrassment, guessed its cause, reflected for a moment, asked herself rapidly if she had in any way given reason for just offence, found no touch

of consciousness, and crossing the room with a dignified but modest air, had just reached the door, when Rudolphe, starting from the spot to which he had a moment before seemed rooted, approached her respectfully, and, in the very teeth of the sneering circle, would have conducted her from the apartment. His eyes sparkled with rage and indignation; she raised hers gratefully but proudly to him, inclined her head to signify a refusal which he saw it was useless to oppose, and then passing through the vestibule and the private door of the flower-garden, which opened only to favourites, fled like the invisible wind, and was out of sight in a moment.

No sooner had Giulietta quitted the castle, than the duke's conscience smote him bitterly. He felt ashamed of the pitiful scene in which he had been made an actor; and but for his dignity, which he rarely forgot, would himself have followed Giulietta. He even went so far as almost to commend Rudolphe openly, when, on being requested by a message from his mother to join her evening circle, he refused verbally, and with the brief excuse that he had other engagements.

The scene was obviously a failure, an impolitic

invention ; the prince was already a lover, and his mother's unkindness to *Giulietta* at once converted him into a champion. She had invested him (very unintentionally) with the spurs ; and before he had retired to rest that night, he had vowed a vow—a lover's vow—which, whether he kept or not, time will discover.

But as it was not the fashion of *Herpsberg* to mutiny openly, at least against the commands of the duke, the royal mandate continued still in force, and *Rudolphe* prepared to obey it, if not with cheerfulness, yet with some show of resignation. For he loved and respected his uncle even in (what he called) his prejudices ; and fearing them less since he had either found, or fancied, that they were counterpoised by the tenderness which the duke felt for *Giulietta*, soon brought himself to believe that they might be conquered—if not by a single blow, perhaps by an effort of perseverance.

Nothing seems unattainable to youth and love. Hope was the lever by which *Rudolphe* was to turn his world, to upset hereditary pride and habitual stateliness, break through the fixed-bayonets of ancestry and rank, and stand before the seat of pigmy sovereignty—always relentless and

proud in proportion to its littleness—demanding honour for a bride without crest or quarters, and obtaining it.

And with this hope, which, wild and altogether visionary as it seemed, he had contrived by the power of love's alchymy to transfuse into the heart of Giulietta, he departed, attended by a gallant suite for the court of Petersburg. And the duke and the princess, the cavaliers and the ladies, and all the train of contributors to the festivities of the castle, re-crossed the Alps, and left the village of Oriana once more to its loneliness,—loneliness made known for the first time to its inhabitants by the power of contrast.

Every one had their regrets: the young girls regretted the attentions of the gentlemen in green and gold, or blue and silver; the youths, who idled about the castle, their share of the sports and flesh-pots; the old crones the daily bread of their gossippings; and *all*, the bustle and excitement which had become an article of necessity to their vacant minds.

But how did Giulietta support the change? Did she too regret the past,—the velvet sofas, perfumed saloons, and admiring glances? O no! her ex-

perience had been quick and cruel, but effectual. She had but one regret, one recollection; the rest had vanished like a dream, leaving behind it that kind of unconnected impression which clings about us for a moment as we start from sleep, and then fades into the chaos of the unremembered past. Hers was a fine and lofty spirit, and instead of brooding over the insult which had been offered to her, she gathered up her offended feelings into one strong emotion of contempt for the offenders, and then forgot them altogether: as we shake off a reptile which annoys though it cannot hurt us, and then seeing its insignificance, laugh at ourselves for having been disturbed by so impotent an enemy.

But that one regret,—how deep and strong it was! It was for Rudolphe—and the fear that sprung up with it—the fear lest some one fairer and finer should enthral him. O, that indeed was wretchedness!

It was true that he had vowed—but lovers' vows (so had Gioconda told her) were but idle make-weights—and even sworn, and looked like Apollo, the best of all the gods, while he did so; yet what (she often thought) was the bare memory of her

poor charms against the present influence of the fair court ladies with whom Rudolphe was now to live? And then her birth, and unaccomplished mind,—and so she went on, until she had thought herself into fancying that he had loved her as children do blackberries, which they throw away when the grapes ripen, wondering how they could have relished things so homely.

—III.—

Rudolphe arrived at St. Petersburg when the ground was covered with snow and the ladies with furs, and as he inhaled the close odour of the Russian stove, thought of the flowery turf and genial sunshine of Oriana. It is true that he was not unused to this odour, for stoves were in vogue at Herpsberg; but he had fallen in love at the sunny side of the Alps, which made all the difference. Had it been in Greenland, his enamoured fancy would doubtless have dwelt lovingly on crystal caves, and cataracts frozen in their gush and hanging in long icicles like the beard of a polar giant: he would have likened the eyes of his

beloved to the Aurora Borealis, and her step to the bound of the rein-deer: but, as it was, his imagination would hold no commerce but with nightingales and roses, blossoming myrtles and orange buds; his dreams had neither fog or smoke in them; they were all bright daylight dreams, which by the by these 'phantasms of sleep' rarely are. In dreams the sun seldom shines,—not that we miss it, or find our pleasant fancies a whit less splendid, or less cheerful, because of the veiled light which seems to fall through a curtain of thin gauze upon them.

In short, Rudolphe's heart was too full of summer associations to accommodate itself to the snow and ice of Petersburg. Booted and furred ladies were to him seriously disagreeable; and though many would have risked catching cold for his sake, had they known his private opinion, yet he never made an effort to better the matter, and contented himself with musing on aprons full of roses, and green nets with threads of gold and vine-leaves woven into them.

There lived at this period in St. Petersburg, a Countess Czernikoff, who was said to have played some odd part in her youth; but who now, as

report went, had wrapped up herself and her sins in the mantle of devotion. She had been in her early days—no one exactly knew what; but in maturer years had suddenly made her appearance in the Russian capital, proclaiming herself the widow of the Austrian General Luckner, and making much display of a tall easy person, and a wonderful pair of eyes. She was then, perhaps, about forty, but called herself thirty-five, and when lit up, at night, might have passed for less upon the uninitiated; but the skilled talked of the services of a blonde marmotte which she used to knot under her chin with the most negligent grace imaginable, therewith concealing (as the envious would have it) all that Time had stolen from the firm contour of the cheek and throat.

Be that as it may, the old Count Czernikoff, who thought her a bud because he had some twenty or thirty years the start of her, became enamoured of her beauty, and touched by a certain expression of melancholy which sometimes cast a sudden shade over her countenance, even in those moments when the spirit of conquest was most in action. Conscious that he had no time to lose, he wooed and won her; and having enjoyed for about six months the

glory of so bright a triumph, considerably slipped out of the world, leaving his fair wife to the enjoyment of a vast fortune and an honourable name.

Some tie of friendship, or convenience, had once united this lady and the Princess Herminia; but all correspondence had long ceased between them. It was by chance that Rudolphe heard of her existence; and some rumour of her having once been a favourite of his mother's reaching him in the same way, he conceived it necessary to perform the ceremony of a visit.

She had grown old, and knew it—an unfortunate discovery sometimes, so far at least as the temper is concerned; but the countess had strength of mind enough to forget that her eyes had served for other purposes than that of seeing with, and was content to obscure their remaining lustre by submitting to the necessity of spectacles.

Fame had reported her to Rudolphe as an austere and crabbed devotee, and he saw with surprise a lady who, living apart from the world, still preserved its most refined and courtly habits, a countenance not so much habitually gracious as capable of being so occasionally, and in the eyes a look that had not yet done with life, and that came and

went fitfully, depicting in its lights and shadows the workings of a passionate, noble, but perhaps ill-regulated mind. In short, a person the very reverse of his mother in every respect, the polish of high breeding alone excepted; and when he added to the disparity of character that of years, his wonder was awakened that any thing like friendship should have existed between two persons so entirely dissimilar.

A closer intimacy with the Countess Czernikoff, disclosed to Rudolphe many shades of character which he had not at first remarked; and amongst others, the embers of a vast ambition, and an imagination still ardent, and susceptible of being worked upon by expert means. She often talked of the Princess Herminia as one to whose kindness she stood much indebted; and yet at times there was something in her look and manner that seemed at variance with the grateful warmth which her lips expressed; it was as if the recollection of the princess's favour was connected in her mind with other reminiscences of a less pleasing character.

It chanced, one evening, that Rudolphe—whose thoughts were always in the bowers of Oriana—spoke of Italy, and suddenly asked the countess

if she had ever been there. That evening she wore no spectacles, and the odd expression of her eyes when she answered,—“Yes; but so long ago that I have almost forgotten it,” struck him at the moment as something singular. “How is it possible,” he continued, “that a person of your fine and sensitive mind can willingly shiver amidst this veiled nature, when you have a recollection, however vague, of that lovely land,—that land of beautiful thoughts and gracious images?”

“I do not remember it sunnily,” she replied, “and as we grow old, we are disposed to take root and vegetate wherever fate has planted us.”

“I could quarrel with fate,” said the prince, “for not having planted you at Oriana.”

“At Oriana!” exclaimed the countess unguardedly. “What do you know of Oriana?”

“A great deal. My uncle has a castle in the neighbourhood.”

“And your mother—does she visit it?”

“She has done so.”

“Good heavens, how strange!”

“But it did not please her,” continued Rudolphe, warmed into communicativeness by an inward feeling which seemed to push him forward.

“There was one in its vicinity whom you would have dearly loved; but my mother took her in abhorrence.”

“Who was she?” asked the countess eagerly.

“May I tell you all?” said Rudolphe, in great agitation; “may I speak to you of *Giulietta*?”

“*Giulietta*! What—she whom the priest discovered at his door?”

“How!” exclaimed the prince, starting up and seizing the hands of the countess; “you know her then?”

“Not now,” she replied in a tone of deep embarrassment, “not now.”

“But you have known her? Tell me, I conjure you, who and what she is—not what she seems, of that my heart assures me. Have pity on me, for the love of Heaven! and if you know more of my *Giulietta* than has already come to light, on my knees I beseech you to disclose it to me.”

The countess stepped back a pace or two, and exclaimed,—“Your mother!”

“My most unkind mother!” echoed Rudolphe.

“And most unsearchable!” said the countess solemnly. And then retreating into an adjoining chamber, appeared no more for the evening.

Rudolphe never saw Madame Czernikoff after that night. It was in vain that he haunted her door ; it was rigorously closed against him. She was ill, or absent, or occupied, but always invisible ; yet still he lingered round her walls, watching every shadow that flitted by, listening to every sound as if life or death were in it, and submitting to the rude repulses of the domestics, who were weary of seeing him, and of repeating the denial to which they were strictly enjoined. Thus were weeks passed in vain attempts to procure an interview with her who seemed to hold the thread of his destiny, when in the midst of the most cruel perplexities came a letter from the Princess Herminia, urging his departure from St. Petersburg, where it seemed to her that he had loitered too long, for he had much to see, she said ; and so, having traced a plan of more extended travel, she counselled him to set off without delay for Moscow, where her old friend Prince Paul Petrovitch would do the honours of the ancient capital to his young guest.

Rudolphe obeyed,—perhaps because he felt that to remain was useless, and hoped that by his absence the countess might be thrown more off her guard. So quitting Petersburg with the decided intention

of returning speedily, surprising her, and wresting the important secret, either by stratagem or persuasion, from her too close keeping, he arrived at Moscow, where high festivities, cordial greetings, and most gracious smiles awaited him. But he spied stratagem in every proffered service, and a design in every hospitable arrangement; and when the young and beautiful Countess Volonsky smiled upon him, he saw in her only the agent of a plot formed to allure him from his allegiance to Giulietta.

Perhaps he was not wrong,—at least one less versed than he was in such matters might have had suspicions, for never did beauty so disdainful lavish itself so carelessly. Wherever Rudolphe was, there was she also, solicitous to obtain even a passing word; her colour heightening, if he turned towards her, and her fine eyes sparkling with delight when by her grace and vivacity she succeeded in extorting a languid smile, or unfrequent compliment.

It was probable that his reserve had piqued her into the exercise of all her powers, for fair ladies despise easy conquests, will go far to obtain a difficult victory, and then—soft souls!—have their own way of abusing it. Be this as it may, certain it

was, that what had been begun in vanity, was obviously taking the colouring of passion ; and while he became every day colder and more repulsive, she grew more earnest and pursuing, throwing herself in his way with the thoughtlessness of a creature to whose rank and beauty every thing was sure to be forgiven, and who well knew that by one look she could win back the indulgence of those who were most disposed to frown upon her. Not that it ever entered into her calculations to study the opinion of others, or care whether people frowned or smiled,—could any one frown upon her ? She thought not,—that is, if she thought at all about the matter ; and with this certainty of pleasing, came that happy careless confidence which ensures success, and is at once cause and effect.

But in the great attack she failed, for the more demonstrative grew the fair countess, the more did Rudolphe shrink back and hide himself, like those ungrateful flowers which shut themselves up and will not prosper while the sun shines on them. The truth was, that every overture of the charming Volonsky came upon his heart—no, it did not go so far,—upon his fancy then, like a bolt of ice, freezing up every particle of warm feeling, and

forcing back his offended imagination to seek repose in the contemplation of *Giulietta's* pure and vestal image,—so true it is that real love is absolutely exclusive, and suffers nothing in the absence of the object loved but its remembrance. Another week, and *Rudolphe* was on his road to *Petersburgh*, retracing his steps so hastily, that none guessed that he had quitted *Moscow*.

The night was wild and dreary ; the winds roared, and the forest creaked so fearfully, that the horses which drew the prince's carriage suddenly stopped, shuddering and plunging as if possessed, while the servants stood aghast, asserting that something had strode across the road and grinned at them. It was the shadow of a tree, whose branches swayed backwards and forwards with a wild doleful sound, while the lightning glared through its split trunk ; but fear had converted it into the spectre huntsman, or wicked spirit of the desert. *Rudolphe* paused, and looked round for an asylum ; a lone and uninhabited shed stood not far off ; with some difficulty the horses were secured in a sheltered

corner, and the travellers struck a light, and entered the hovel.

Rudolphe had scarcely taken possession of a pitchy nook, separated from another by a partition of gaping planks carelessly put together, when the rattling of wheels and the clamour of voices announced the arrival of other travellers, whom the fury of the tempest had driven to the same poor shelter. A moment after the dim niche beside him appeared to be occupied; and when the first bustle had subsided, he heard the voice of a man addressing himself to some one, who, from the tone and manner of the speaker, was evidently a female, and his superior in rank. Having no desire to listen to a conversation in which he was not meant to be a participator, Rudolphe rose to withdraw to a more remote corner; when a voice, too familiar to his ear to be mistaken, said, as if in answer to the one who had spoken first,—“ You are right; she is less pliant than I once thought her, but distress promises much which prosperity refuses to perform: the Countess Czernikoff is no longer Bertha. And then her romantic interest for Giulietta, her admiration of the boy's foolish passion and strange forgetfulness of the distinction of ranks.”

“ But after all, she has no proof of *Giulietta's* birth,” observed the first speaker.

“ Nor would disclose it, if she had,” returned the other voice. “ She was ambitious, proud, poor : willingly making sacrifices to promote her personal views, but incapable of what she called dishonour. Has she not shunned the prince, in whose interest her heart is lodged, lest by look or word she should betray the secret partially entrusted to her keeping? But a little of her history, and you will better know the stuff she is made of.

“ A sad adventure in early life closed the paternal door against her : a long and miserable experience followed. At length, chance threw her in my way : she was still handsome, distressed in circumstances, cast out from society, and devoured by ambition. Conscious of possessing talents, and eager to find means of displaying them, she seemed an engine made expressly for my use, and at first appeared to lend herself willingly to my purposes. I ventured a little farther, but it would not do. All that courage, contempt of danger, and inviolable secrecy could achieve, I felt that I could reckon on, nor was she at all insensible to the advantages which were to be reaped by compliance ; but

whatever she weakly considered as implicating her honour,—a thing never *really* but when publicly involved,—she rejected proudly. For her half services, she was repaid by an honourable marriage with old General Luckner, and an admission into that class of society from which she had been long excluded. Conjectures she has, of course, indulged in, but has never been able to ascertain whether they were or were not based on truth. Had I confided in her, she would have kept my secret, and refused me her assistance.—But here is the letter which I received from her yesterday, and which hastened my departure from Petersburg. Her letters seem my destiny ; one hurried me from Herpsberg, the other sends me on to Moscow. The presence of Madame Grovenstein prevented me from communicating to you the contents of that which Bertha sent to me from her retreat at —— ; but now that we are alone, listen and you will see at once how far she may be counted on.”

The words “ we are alone ” struck on the conscience of Rudolphe. He hesitated whether to stop or to retreat ; but he already knew too much to leave the rest unknown, when on that rest depended all that he prized in existence. To fly, would be

to throw away the only clue to the mystery of *Giulietta's* birth which might ever present itself. Had he a right to do so? He thought not, but cared not to examine the point too nicely. That his mother was deeply and questionably interested in this strange business was evident; and thoughts too frightful for shape or utterance passed like nameless and unformed monsters through the chaos of his mind.

He staid: perhaps he was wrong,—I seek not to justify—I only recount. He staid; and, placed in total darkness close to the partition, saw through its wide chinks the Princess *Herminia*, who drew a letter from her bosom, while one whom he recognised as her confidential creature—or, as he was called, secretary—stood opposite to her, his obsequious eyes fixed anxiously on those bright orbs, whose portentous calm he had been long accustomed to translate tremblingly. Her face was singularly pale, but her brow untroubled; and with the beautiful fingers of her right hand, she seemed to trace characters on the plank which, placed between them, served the purposes of a table.

A lamp burned on it. The princess remained for a few moments buried in thought; then opened

the paper, and running over two or three sentences mutteringly, cleared her voice with a gentle hem, and read in a calm tone what follows:—

“Never, never can what I owe to you be forgotten! It was you who drew me out from the living tomb, within which the errors of my youth seemed to have buried me for ever. When left alone with guilt, and shame, and sorrow,—asking for death, yet daring not to seek it,—you stood before me in all the glory of power, and youth, and unparalleled beauty,—you came to me like the angel of mercy,—to me!—a wretch abandoned by the good, and yet not wretch enough to have forgotten their lost companionship!

“Noble and beloved lady, judge what my heart, which has not grown old with its more perishable investment, feels towards you! Ask for my life, it is yours; use it as you will, it shall be joyfully employed, or yielded for your service. One thing alone I cannot do, nor would it avail your highness if I could. Never will another image efface that of *Giulietta*. Prince *Rudolphe's* is not a common heart: had it been, this humble maiden, obscure and unprotected, would have inspired a far other sentiment than that profound and all

absorbing one, which finds in the recollection of the past a safeguard against the temptation of the present. Pardon me, madam, when I say that your highness misconceives the character of your son. The habitual intimacy which deadens penetration has—in this one instance alone—perhaps impeded the exercise of your usually perfect judgment. Prince Rudolphe will resist the allurements of the Countess Volonsky, all beautiful though she may be, and will repel with equal firmness any attempt which may be made to misrepresent Giulietta. His confidence in her is perfect and unchangeable. It is not a blind belief in vows and promises, but a firm faith in truth and principle: in his eyes she is the living symbol of purity, and all others seem but painted semblances. And then have not you, madam, even you yourself said, that he who loved Giulietta would never love another? Pardon my boldness, but if she be—as I have sometimes imagined—the child of an honourable though concealed marriage, and without other stain upon her birth than that which the rigour of fate has cast upon it, why should she—fair, wise, and virtuous as she is—be condemned to so unmeet a destiny? Your highness has said that her mien became her birth.

Forgive me if I say, perhaps too daringly, that it should be a cause beyond imagining powerful which could induce or justify concealment, when that concealment deprives an innocent person of her just distinctions, and consigns her to what the world calls obloquy.

“My heart dies within me, when I think of what that cause may be. Fitz-Gortzen!—but no, no; that is too horrible! Yet you, madam, once and without seeming aware of it, did drop some words that seemed to say as much; his race was high and powerful, but his crimes left no name for his offspring. I know—all know of your divine compassion for the wretched woman who accompanied him in his flight: might not your pure mind have found a gratification congenial to its nature in rescuing their child from the contagion of crime? But I will not dwell upon this too terrible solution of a mystery, which I feel that I ought not to discover while it is your wish to conceal it from me. Perhaps I have already gone too far: forgive me, princess, and believe that she who risks offending by her words, would freely serve you with her life. Command me to the death in all but one thing: never can I consent to become accessory to any act

which may prevent *Giulietta* from retrieving that which she has unwilfully lost ; never can I become her enemy. When your highness placed her a helpless infant in my arms, my heart yearned towards her. How beautiful she was, and how I loved her ! She was the idol, too, of that excellent man whose honourable name I bore, the charm and plaything of his old age. When death withdrew him from us, you, madam, can bear witness to the grief with which (yielding to your highness's commands) I separated myself from her : but you had intimated the necessity of absolute concealment, and my province was to obey. I chose the protection of one who had loved me in the days of my innocence, — a good and pious man, under whose virtuous roof I knew she would be safe and cherished, — and then left her with a pang as sharp as that which the body feels when the soul is separated from it.

“ I remember well the evening, — it was at the close of May. I see the sky as it looked then, and smell the sweet southern air as it then breathed upon us. We knelt before the high altar, and the good priest looked at me ; but he knew me not in the mean disguise in which I was enveloped. Years too, and sorrow — but all this is foreign to my sub-

ject. Since that evening I have never seen Giulietta ; but I know how good and pure, and bright and beautiful she must be. Ask not, madam, of a grateful heart that to which it cannot—ought not to accede. But if the true light has at all broken in upon me, if the terrible name of Count Frederich Gortzen be indeed the obstacle which opposes itself to Giulietta's better fortune, then would I respectfully counsel your highness to proceed immediately to Moscow ; for I have reason to know, through one who has anxiously observed Prince Rudolphe, that his intention is to quit that city speedily, and then perhaps the clue to his immediate movements may be altogether lost, and with it the means of preventing a marriage, which, if my poor Giulietta be indeed the daughter of Count Gortzen, ought never—under any circumstances—to take place.

“I anticipate, yet not fearfully, your highness's indignation, should my boldness be misconstrued. I say not fearfully, because I feel that I am ready to devote my life to you, and that your noble nature cannot long misunderstand the feelings by which I am actuated. Ask of me any thing which human courage can perform ; I am ready,—so that it be not to wound the heart, or impugn the fame

of one whom I have blessed as she lay beside me sleeping, and whom my heart still loves as fondly as when I last pressed my lips to hers, and wetted her forehead with my tears."

"You see," said the princess, smiling ironically, "that nothing reasonable can be expected from these heroics, and that to drop all intercourse with Madame Czernikoff is the safest plan which we can adopt. I have sounded her sufficiently, and find that her gratitude, as she calls it, refuses to bear arms. The counsel is however good. If my son quits Moscow privately, it will be to return to Herpsberg: this we must prevent. How little did I think, when I urged him to visit Petersburg, that it was inhabited by Bertha,—I had so long lost sight of her. From a similar oversight has arisen all the anxiety caused by our fatal visit to Oriana. Contented to have disengaged myself from Giulietta, and knowing that she was safe, I felt my conscience at rest, and her existence had almost slid out of my memory."

Here the princess raised her eyes to those of her acquiescent auditor, and in their soft expression Rudolphe thought he read a meaning almost Satanic, "But," she continued, "when I heard her

story, the description of the woman in the brown mantle, the name of Father Nicolas, of whom Bertha had often spoken as being the only person to whom she would willingly entrust Giulietta, regretting at the same time that she was ignorant of his abode,—an instant light broke upon me ; and when the next day she returned to the castle, her air, her smile, the movement of her hands, her peculiar way of saying ‘ the duke,’ all brought with them that intimate conviction which amounts to certainty. Weak woman that I am ! Worlds would I have given to have disunited them : yet did I uninquiringly send him here—here, to this odious Russia, where alone he could have found a thread to hold by. But I am here too, (she exclaimed triumphantly,) and in time, I trust. I did not stop long to ponder on the news of Bertha’s friendship for him ; and though the success of my plans should involve even the life of Rudolphe, no earthly power shall turn me from my purpose. I will not be defeated—I have sworn it. And now for Moscow. The night clears, the tempest has abated, we may proceed in safety ; see that all be ready, and lose no minutes of a time so precious.”

The obedient servitor retired; the princess's women entered, wrapped their august mistress in rich furs, and in a few minutes all had vanished. Rudolphe remained like one awakened from a fearful dream, whose distorted imagery had melted into air, but left behind it that vague and fathomless obscurity which the shrinking spirit dares not penetrate. An awful idea took possession of his mind: *Giulietta*—he tried to hide it from himself, but the evidence was frightfully strong, or fear made it seem so; it pressed upon his soul, it spoke in through his closed ears,—*Giulietta* was the daughter of a felon! of one who had abused the gifts of nature and of fortune to hideous purposes! of one who, steeped in guilt, hesitated not to lure the wife of his brother from her home, and going on from crime to crime, became in his last moments a public spectacle to shouting crowds, who forgot their ordinary sympathy with crime in its retributive moments, to rejoice that he—the great captain of the band of human blood-hounds—was made extinct. But day dawned, and the necessity of immediate decision roused him from his terrible musings. He started on his feet; and shaking off the incubus which had hung upon him, rushed

out of the hut, and was speedily on the road to Petersburg.

But it was not his intention to remain there long; all that the Countess Czernikoff could tell him, he already knew. His design was to hasten back to Herpsberg, crave a private interview of the duke his uncle, and then disclose all that he had learned of Giulietta's story. He did so. The duke listened at first incredulously, but as proofs thickened, with manifest astonishment. For some moments after the prince had ceased speaking, he seemed buried in thought, when suddenly starting up, he exclaimed,—

“ It cannot be. 'Tis nothing more than a false light hung out to mislead a credulous, because a grateful woman. And yet (he added, after another pause,) it was once said that your mother loved that Gortzen—would even have married him; but it was not true. He was a fiend, with the eloquence and beauty of a god; and there may have been a time when Herminia's vanity was flattered by his homage, but nothing more. True, she showed pity to the wretched woman who fled with him, and who died, if I remember right, in the convent of Saint Elizabeth, at Gratz: but it was

one of your mother's public works of charity, one of those acts which have angelled her with the multitude. A secret mercy, such as that of rescuing the child of Gortz from the heritage of obloquy, without noise, without fame, without witnesses, is not upon her gilt and lettered register of good works."

The duke paused a moment, then said, "Think you that your mother knows who was her neighbour in the hut?"

"I think not."

"And yet her attendants were likely to have learned it from yours, when that foul night brought them together?"

"Impossible. The men who drove me were peasants, ignorant alike of my name or quality. Wishing for secrecy, I had taken with me but one domestic, and he a true one,—my faithful Gaspar, who, knowing my desire, kept out of sight till the princess had departed."

"It is well. But to return to Count Frederick: as to your mother's having loved him in his brighter days, it was an idle rumour. I know Herminia well, am no stranger to her vast ambition, to the great resources of her giant mind,—why must I

say, to her capacity for evil. The volcano whose surface is covered with snow, is the true emblem of your mother's soul ; but no love, no tenderness, no errors of the heart : her habitual firmness never was broken in upon by an emotion even of transient weakness. I knew her once kind, ardent, and sincere in friendship : I owe her much for it, but love never even occupied her imagination." Rudolphe listened in intense agitation, but spoke not, and the duke continued : " Your father was the handsomest cavalier of his day. Many a proud heart beat for him, many a young cheek flushed at his approach ; he loved your mother to idolatry, and she loved him—after her fashion—better perhaps than any thing, except her ambition ; but not as you—as I myself have been beloved."

A shade—it was of recollection—passed across the features of the duke. Speaking rapidly, as if to shake off some painful thought, he said, " But who is this Countess Czernikoff ? By what name did she pass here at Herpsberg ?"

" She was called Bertha."

" Bertha !" exclaimed the duke, " did you say Bertha ? Ah, I remember well the time, when one to whom I could refuse nothing spoke to me

of her. It was just then—just then—but dates, you have no dates ?”

“None that are explicit,” replied Rudolphe, whose emotion almost choked his utterance; “but it would be easy. We might—Giulietta is nineteen, as well as can be judged: it is now fifteen years since Bertha—”

“Hush!” interrupted the duke, in an awful tone, and starting up suddenly. “Do you hear nothing?”

“Nothing,” said the prince, surprised.

“What! not footsteps: nothing that moves across that shadowy gallery?”

“I hear nothing but the sound of our voices.”

“Our voices! Hers was a voice from heaven, an angel’s voice!” Then advancing his head as if in the attitude of listening, “Is it not sweet, (he said,) sweet but mournful! she never sings gaily now.” Then turning to Rudolphe, with a look which sunk into his heart, “She is in heaven! but now and then they let her come to bless me; I should die else.”

Rudolphe shuddered: he had never heard of the sorrows which had shaken his uncle’s reason, nor of the mental aberration under which he some-

times laboured when thought glanced backwards. "You tremble, boy," the duke continued. "Ah! does she frighten you? It is the shroud that makes her look so ghastly." And then, with wild and terrifying gaiety, he whispered, "She wore court dresses once; but the worms are bad companions and spoil beauty. But see! she quits me; she glides from my arms! O, my beloved! my Isolina, leave me not thus! Ah! the hour is come. Hold the lamp low: they will not see thee. On tip-toe, my love, and knock gently. O God! to part is dreadful!"—and then he sunk back, as if exhausted by the violence of his emotions.

Rudolphe remained motionless, penetrated to the quick by the subduing spectacle before him, and doubting whether or not to call for assistance; but the duke, after remaining some time motionless, rose slowly, and pressing the prince's hand, said, with a melancholy but composed air, "It is all over now; fear nothing:" then passed with a feeble step into his chamber, and in a few moments Rudolphe heard him summon the confidential servant who attended habitually upon him.

—IV.—

But while these scenes were taking place at Herpsberg, how passed the hours in the curate's cottage at Oriana? Alas! but gloomily. Hope had supported Giulietta in the first days of absence; but days had lengthened into months, and expectation had ended in disappointment.

When Rudolphe left the castle, he had with difficulty obtained Father Nicolas's leave to write to him, provided he did so only once, and then merely to give assurance of his safe arrival at the place of his destination; for the good man, though he knew nothing of the world, and saw no reason why his Giulietta should not be a fitting bride for the first prince in the land, had still too much innate delicacy not to be sensible that to encourage rebellion or clandestine intercourse was, under any circumstances, unworthy both of his principles and calling. But compassion for Rudolphe's deep despair, and for Giulietta's speechless sorrow, softened him into a certain extent of compliance; a compliance not however trespassed on. No letter came—the skilful Herminia took care of that—no word of love, sent by a passing messenger; no other

news than that which spreading from the servants still remaining at the castle to the village, and from thence to the curate's dwelling, quickly found its way to Giulietta's ear, and let her know, too soon and surely, that Rudolphe was at Petersburgh.

At Petersburgh ! so many hundred miles away, and not one word : and yet he could not be false, she knew he could not ; for had he not said that he could never love another ? And then his eyes ! if ever eyes spoke truth his did : it was Gioconda that reckoned upon the eyes, for Giulietta had never dared to spell them. But time passed on, and the chilly autumn evenings came, muffling themselves in clouds as if to bear her sad heart company ; and then she would sit while daylight held, gazing on a map which was always before her, and tracing the road from *her* Alps to the far-off Petersburgh ; or wander through the vineyards until she came within sight of the castle turrets, and then sit down and look upon them, till night came and she could look no longer.

On one of these still, grey evenings, three minstrel boys were grouped upon the patch of green sward before the curate's door, singing their wild

ballads to such as would listen to them, and hoping to gather a few baiochis to help them on their journey over the mountain to the gold and diamond country, which they were told lay at the other side of it.

Their verse was rude, and their music no better; but the children of the village had gathered round, and were opening their great black eyes, as if they heard through them, to take in the rough melody. Giulietta too was there, sitting on a stone, and listening with the rest to the sad legend of "The Forsworn Knight," as the boys had christened their ditty, which ran thus:—

THE FORSWORN KNIGHT.

Down in the valley, beneath the green hill,
There sits a lone maiden beside the cold rill;
And as it flows by her, her moaning she makes,
And thus to the birds that fly round her she speaks:
"Come, neighbour nightingale, sing me to rest,
For heavy 's the sorrow that sits on my breast."

The leaves fly about her, the birds warble near,
The rill gushes over, and so does the tear;
But the knight 's in his castle and hears not her sigh,
As she calls to the bird that is hovering nigh,
"Come, neighbour nightingale, sing me to rest,
For heavy 's the sorrow that sits on my breast."

The time had long passed since the knight, riding on
With a hawk on his hand, like a king on his throne,
Heard a voice that sang blythely beside the lone rill,
While the bright sun was sinking, the light winds were still,
“ Sing, neighbour nightingale, (so went the lay,)
I could list to thy sweet note the whole summer's day.’

The knight checked his courser, who, pawing the ground,
Alarm'd the shy maiden : her eye glanced around ;
Then up on her light feet, and off like the wind,
Leaving garland, and sheep-hook, and distaff behind :
And still neighbour nightingale sang on above,
His carol of sadness, his legend of love.

But the knight, did he linger ? O, no ! he is gone,
Like the roe o'er the mountain, the cloud that's wind-blown ;
And now by the side of the cold rill they walk,
While alike are forgotten the sheep and the hawk,
And lone neighbour nightingale sings on the tree,
But nothing for him, or his sweet song, cares she.

And so hand in hand through the valley they rov'd,
And she listen'd and smil'd, while he swore that he loved :
And he talked of rich robes, and of diamonds and gold ;
And tales of great lords and poor maidens he told ;
While the nightingale seemed to have borrow'd the throat
Of the skylark, so sunny and gay was its note.

But the knight's in his castle, and so is his bride,
And the maiden's alone by the sullen rill's side :
There is music, and feasting, and joy in the halls,
And without there's a sweet voice that plaintively calls,
“ Come, neighbour nightingale, sing me to rest,
For heavy's the sorrow that sits on my breast.”

“ Let us come in,” said Giulietta ; “ their music saddens me.”

“ Ay, by my troth,” said Gioconda, “ and well it may. Why, ye whining varlets, do ye think that people are made of stone, that ye come here with your maid’s tragedy to keep us awake o’ nights, thinking of broken hearts, and making screech-owls of our nightingales ? Have ye nothing pleasant in the way of a psalm, or a genteel canzonetta, or a—”

“ Lord love your heart ! fair lady,” interrupted the elder boy, “ have we pleasant songs ? Ay, and canticles and merry ballads for the vine-dressers. But, holy St. Damien, who pays for them ? No ; when we are gay, none think we are hungry : ’tis ‘ The Wounded Knight,’ or ‘ The Dead Lady,’ that brings in the soldi. But we have many besides ; such as ‘ Love’s Looking-glass,’—‘ The Virgin’s Chaplet,’—‘ The Seven Bright Queens,’—‘ The Shepherd’s Star,’ and ‘ Saint Diana’s Garment ;’ to say nothing of the story of the Count Gonzaga’s wife, and how Barbarossa the pirate would have carried her off out of her burning castle. Then there’s ‘ The Ringdove.’ Come, Toni Mochi, let’s tune up ‘ the Ringdove ;’ ’tis a sooth and

loving ballad for a fair gentlewoman's ear, and you shall hear how Toni coos—ay, like any dove in the forest."

But Giulietta and her friend had disappeared, and Toni was left to coo for the rabble.

"Hadst thou been better, dearest," said Gioconda, "it might have been pleasant enough to have heard how the tyrant burned the lady in her castle." But Giulietta's mind was many hundred miles away, and neither the woes of the fair Gonzaga, nor Gioconda's insinuation, reached her ear.

Poor Giulietta! thine was entirely a woman's heart. It had no joy but in the exercise of its affections; it was nothing in itself, but love made it every thing, and as it was the source and life-spring of thy happiness, so was it also of thy sorrow. The winter passes rapidly in Italy; it has but time to lay its cold hand upon the flowers, when the sun comes and warms them again into freshness. But the heart!—

It was past and gone, the winter: the air was soft, the sky blue and sunny, and one could see the

blossoms deepen and the buds expand, while the eye watched their progress. In ardent climates, the bud which peeped out yesterday, is to-day in the maturity of its beauty: the developement of nature is, perhaps, too rapid; it anticipates the hopes and wishes in which the heart loves to indulge: we miss the delicious awakening of nature, and the sweet delay with which we love to see her unfold her treasures. But it is of the heart, and not of the seasons that my story speaks, and for *Giulietta* there came no spring. She could not see the flowers burst, the berries ripen, or hear the early song of the birds without thinking that the bloom, the perfume, the music of nature would return for her no more; that the next spring would cover her grave with blossoms, and the first nightingale chaunt her early dirge.

It was in this mood, when every thing but herself was gay, that she wandered out into the fields, remembering how gay she too had been when the last spring-flowers had blossomed, and how cold and chill her heart might be before they came again; when suddenly she found herself beside the wall where, perched like a wood-nymph, she had been first seen by *Rudolphe*. The broken column was

still there ; but a rose-tree, which had wound itself round it, had fallen with a portion of the marble, and lay amongst the scattered fragments and over-running lichens at its base.

“And I, too,” said Giulietta, smiling mournfully, “I clung too fondly to the prop which my poor heart trusted in. I was like that rose.”

“Talk not thus, Giulietta,” said Gioconda, on whose arm she leant, “and above all look not thus : you are enough to break one’s heart with your fancies. *You* like that rose, trodden under foot and withered ! No, truly ; we shall live to tell the prince another story. But here comes Marco Procolo, the princess’s right-hand man : it is not a little that has brought him down to Oriana. Let’s talk with him, and learn what news he brings.” Then wiping away the tears which were fast gathering in the corners of her eyes, she accosted him with a few words of inquiry as to the health of the good duke and the Lady Herminia his mistress.

The servitor was communicative, and having greeted Gioconda with civility and Giulietta with respect, ran on about the excellent duke, who, he rejoiced to say, grew gayer and younger every day, and his gracious mistress, who was well, and in

Russia with her son. Then starting off with the most natural air imaginable, as if his tongue had slipped its cables before he was aware, "But we shall soon have them all back again, (said he,) and I promise you we shall make your bells ring and your hearts beat joyfully, for my young master will bring down his bride. He is going to be married, you know,—or perhaps you don't know—to the great Polish beauty, the Princess Volonsky, own niece to the empress, and heaven knows what else besides. It's all settled, and I have come down just to set things going a little. But here I am loitering, whilst a score of people wait for me yonder. Farewell, ladies; we shall have gay doings ere the maize ripens."

"Married!" exclaimed Giulietta, turning as pale as death.

"Married, indeed!" echoed Gioconda in another tone; "they will never make me believe that. O no; if he be false, there is no truth in the Gospel. I would as soon believe that holy St. Dominick had picked up his rosary at a huckster's stall. No, no; he'll none of their outlandish ladies, who would as lieve kneel down to Diana as to St. Peter himself. And if he has played us false," added she, bridling

up, while the blood mounted to her forehead, "it is not because this year's grapes fail, that we should never have wine in our cellars. Cheer up, my pretty dove, and bless thy stars, that if thou art not the prince's wife, neither art thou his mother's daughter. She would have killed thee, my blossom, with her pride and her coldness, or worn out thy heart; and then turned thee adrift, like a dried husk, or a superannuated tire-woman."

They were now on the threshold of their cottage, and Giulietta, who had listened in silence, or had not perhaps heard Gioconda's consolations, leant against the porch and looked back towards the hills that rose above the castle. Her whole soul was in her eyes, and never did lips pronounce a sadder, a more eloquent adieu. "Come in, my child," said Gioconda, who had entered first, "and let's be cheerful. We'll show the great folks how little we care for their scorn; we'll let them see that we can hold our heads as high as the best of them." But as she turned her eyes triumphantly on Giulietta, her cheek whitened, her voice faltered: there was no scorn, no pride, no elation in the face she looked upon; nothing was there but the absorbed expression of overwhelming sorrow.

It is curious to remark how affection refines the mind, and how acute and delicate a rough nature will become under its influence. Gioconda spoke not another word; but passing her arm round Giulietta's waist, supported her to a seat, and pressed her hands with a look so fond and heart-felt, that the poor thing wept, and was a little comforted to see how one heart, at least, still loved her.

Father Nicolas had been up in the hills to speak on some matters relative to his church with the abbot of a neighbouring monastery, and returning through the vineyards, had overtaken some labourers who were on their way home after their day's work at the castle. As they trudged along, they indulged gaily in the anticipation of light tasks and heavy pay for the summer, forestalling the epithalamium in their joyous carols, which all turned upon the marriage of the young prince and the fine Polish lady; and it was thus that the report, so swiftly propagated, came to the ear of the good curatē.

This excellent man whose philosophy was of a

mild and indulgent character,—it was the philosophy of a Christian,—had never severely frowned upon or discouraged Giulietta's hopes ; yet he had some notion, unverified it was true by experience, that flashy words were not always sterling coin, and that princes might not think faith-breaking quite so heinous a crime as the good folks of the valley would have it to be.

His clear and simple mind, uninfluenced by the caprices of temper which inflated or depressed Gioconda's spirits and obscured her judgment, saw at once that if this report was true, Giulietta's happiness was gone for ever. He had not always been a priest, and though none at Oriana were acquainted with his story, for he was from some distant place, yet somehow, all who knew him thought it must be one of suffering. There was in his character a mercifulness to others, which might have come from having known injustice, and a considerate feeling for the weakness of human nature, which is usually the true mark of pure and elevated piety. He counselled, comforted, reproved with gentleness, but never judged. Whether he had felt in his own experience that the destiny of man is difficult, whether he had himself struggled against the

temptations which assail the youthful heart, and being aware of their strength, had learned to pity those who were exposed to the same combats, I know not; but there was a mine of tenderness in his nature which spread out its veins through the soil, with which the severity of self-denial, and the abnegations enjoined by the church, had covered it.

The mirth of the labourers was heaviness to the priest. "If it should be true, (thought he,) what will become of *Giulietta*? and O, the grief to see her young hopes quenched in sorrow! I will go back again to the monastery; if it be as these men say, the abbot must be the first to know it." Then turning back into the path through which he had just passed, he retraced his steps up into the hills.

When he had reached the green platform before the entrance of the convent, the sun was sinking into its gorgeous bed, from whose golden mass some few bright clouds had strayed out more widely, taking the form of islands shining on the blue bosom of the heavens. The priest looked up reverentially: "Who knows (said he, speaking inwardly,) but those luminous clouds which float

abroad and light up the heavens with their beauty, may bear with them the purified spirits appointed to watch over man—the spirits of the just made perfect? We are permitted to hope that such are our guardians: sweet and consoling thought, by which we are linked to immortality! Thou art perhaps there,” he said, speaking aloud, as he looked upwards to a bright cloud which had taken the form of a mountain, with a lonely shore and a wide blue lake below it, “thou art perhaps there, —watching from thy abode of blessedness the old in years and grief, but not in memory.”

A tear gathered in his eye; he was doubtless thinking of some dear lost friend, of some thorny passage of his younger days,—but I never heard his story. We have all had episodes in the long narratives of our household lives, which might be worked into something romantic. Father Nicolas, perhaps, had had his. But whatever may have been the thought that crossed his mind, it was evident that his piety reproved it; for in an accent which seemed as if it would atone by its humility for some movement of presumption, he added, “But no, I am not worthy of so high a grace.”

The vesper-bell had tolled, and the monks were congregated at prayer within the chapel. The curate entered and knelt with them: his previous meditations though combined with images of earth, had sublimed his soul into that high devotional feeling which lifts it above the views, and wrongs, and disappointments of this world. He rose up from his knees more full of resignation than of hope, and prepared, as he thought, to hearken with calmness to all which the abbot might have to communicate. But when he heard his worst fears confirmed, and a passage read from a letter of the Princess Herminia in which she herself informed the monk—as a mark of the respect she bore him—of her son's approaching marriage, his heart grew cold, and it seemed to him as if he listened to the death-warrant of his poor *Giulietta*.

He descended the hill; the flower-bells were closed, the air still and balmy,—it was the hour that he loved; but the fragrance and fresh beauty of the peach and almond blossoms saddened his soul. The young corn put forth its tender green; he looked at it, and said in his heart, “The harvest is blighted: the budding ear will never ripen into gold!”—It was of *Giulietta* he thought.

As he approached his cottage, he saw Gioconda at the door making signs to him to hasten. They say that the messengers of evil fly, but the poor curate had no mind to make good the proverb, and it was not until she had called to him more than once in a voice to which he well knew it was useless to turn a deaf ear, that he quickened his pace and entered his dwelling ;—not as happy men return to their homes after the business of the day is over, but with a foreboding heart, and countenance of evil augury.

“O, you are here at last,” cried Gioconda, in a scolding tone. “Well, better late than never.” Then suddenly softening, “O, father, such sad news as we have heard! He is false—he is forsworn; who could have thought it!”

“I know it all,” interrupted the curate. “But Giulietta, how does she—”

“Bear it, you would ask,—how does she bear it? Like one who had never known grief before. O master! I would that you had been here. She is asleep now; I have given her a little of the infusion that I made for Giacomo’s mother, and there she lies like a lily snapped in two, or the cistus that sheds its leaves when the sun has forsaken it.”

Grief made Gioconda eloquent; Bossuet might have borrowed from her, as she stood before the curate pouring out the fears of which her heart was full, and describing the speechless agony of Giulietta,—her mute and motionless despair.

“I could have wished she had spoken,” said the father. “The grief that finds words, may waste itself; but that which has no utterance, turns inwards, and consumes the heart. But get thee to bed, Gioconda; thou hast need of rest. I will pray for our poor child: He who is sight to the blind, and strength to the weary, can alone comfort her. Man may forsake those who trust in him, but the Lord will not. ‘Doubtless thou art our father,’ he added, in a tone rising into fervour as he spoke, ‘though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not.’”

Gioconda quitted the room, praying inwardly; and having established herself in an arm-chair by the bedside of Giulietta, who (thanks to the drug) still slept profoundly, watched her through the longest and most melancholy night it had ever been her lot to pass.

Towards morning fatigue overcame her, and when Giulietta awoke from her deep but unrefresh-

ing sleep, the first object on which her eyes rested was her fond nurse, still dressed as she had been the day before, and bearing in her fallen features the traces of her anxious and sorrowful vigil. Giulietta started. A confused sensation of evil, a weight of undefined wretchedness hung upon her ; she pressed her hands on her eyes, and tried to piece together the links which lay about broken and disjointed in her memory : suddenly the scattered fragments took shape and semblance, and the frightful truth stood all at once before her.

We, who are no longer young, and who are moreover philosophers, are apt to think lightly of the griefs which tear new hearts in pieces, yet they are not the less real for our indifference ; and when Giulietta raised herself upon her hand, and thought of what the past had promised, and how it had vanished into nothing, leaving the lone and dreary present without a ray of light upon it, save only the sad one which fell from the torch of memory, perhaps the condemned wretch who awaits in terror and in solitude the final moment, feels less than she did.

There are things to which the heart and even the reason cannot reconcile itself. Can either un-

derstand the riddle of inconstancy?—sudden inconstancy, without an antecedent feeling, or at least the sign of one? to be loved one moment—tenderly and exclusively loved, and to be forgotten, or thought of with indifference the next? to *know* that we are as nothing to the heart that once adored us, though we cannot *believe* it?—for conviction comes more slowly than certainly, and it is long before we can fancy words uttered to another, which seemed to have been made for us alone.

But nothing could entirely, or for any length of time, obscure the sweetness of Giuletta's nature, not even the egotism of grief; and when Gioconda awoke, she had already risen, and was preparing the curate's breakfast, with a pale cheek it is true, and a heavy lid, but with a calmness which had more of heroism in it than met the eye. On her lips there was a gentle smile, and in her heart the firm resolution to hide the wound that festered there from those who could not behold her sorrow without becoming intense partakers in it.

Not so Gioconda, who having learnt from Father Nicolas the sad result of his inquiries, could not restrain her grief, but continued squeezing Giuletta's hands and looking in her face; and when she

would have said, "My child, be comforted," burst into tears, and sobbed upon the shoulder of her whom she would have consoled.

"Patience, dear mother," said Giulietta, "all will yet be well, (but tears would come into her eyes as she spoke). If he has forgotten me, you will never do so : I was too aspiring, and Heaven has punished me for my vain presumption. And yet I do not think it was ambition, for had he been obscure and humble, he would not have been the less above all mankind in my eyes."

"Think no more of him, my Giulietta," said the curate, who had entered while the women were talking together ; "he is unworthy of your pure and noble heart."

"Unworthy, perhaps," said Giulietta, "by his faithlessness ; but in all else—O, how above all others !"

"He !" ejaculated Gioconda ; "I wish I had the killing of him. I promise you it would be no sudden death. I should take good care to prolong his torments ; he must be more supple than an eel to slide out of my frying-pan." And so she would have run on ; but the sweet Giulietta put her slender fingers before her lips and smiled on her so

gently, that she was silent before the curate—who had begun to denounce in a tone of severe reprobation her unchristian-like sentiments—had got half-way to the marrow of his discourse.

Duke William rose early in the morning after the strange scene which had taken place between himself and Rudolphe, and opening a window that looked towards the Alps, stood before it in the attitude of deep meditation. Something seemed to pass before him, for he extended his arms—but it was gone. He looked up to the blue and glistening heaven, and then around on the fair aspect of awakening nature; and while he gazed, the troubled expression of his brow seemed to soften into calmness. If there be a moment beyond all others, in which the soul opens to receive those divine impressions which lift it up from earth and teach it its affinity with heaven, it is in the early morning, when the sun returns in its glory to fulfil the promise of its setting, and spread light and heat over the face of the heavens; chasing away the cold clouds that linger after night itself has fled,

with its deeds and its darkness, before the open eye of day. Blessed and beautiful sun!—thy light awakens all that is fairest and most enchanting in nature, all that is best in life,—the song of birds, the breath of flowers, the hopes of man! The parched heart, to which the lingering hours of night have brought nothing but anguish or despair, revives again when the morning sun breaks out; and smiling at the phantoms which the bugbear darkness had rendered so formidable, imbibes the dewy freshness of morning, and opens to peace as flowers do to the sunbeams.

Even the duke,—and yet the scar in his heart was neither slight or curable,—even he felt the supremacy of nature; and the warm breath which stirred into life the myriads of unnamed ephemera who fill the air with their brief exuberance, kindled within him something that he would have called hope, had one so often deceived dared to look into futurity.

He descended by a private staircase into a garden, and passing before the windows of Rudolphe's apartment, which opened on a long terrace shaded by lime-trees, tapped gently: the prince understood the signal and instantly joined his uncle. The duke

was calm, and more than usually accessible; nor was there any thing in his appearance which could have betrayed the secret wanderings of his mind. He greeted Rudolphe affectionately, and as they walked together talking of the air, the sky, the blossoms; of nature's bounties to man, and man's recklessness and abuse of her fair gifts, they came abruptly upon a lonely forest-path, into which the duke suddenly struck, and was followed by Rudolphe.

When they had proceeded some way in silence, the duke stopped, saying "We will talk here; the place is solitary, and suits our purpose."

"It is strange," said the prince, looking round, "from my boyish days this forest has been my haunt; it was my joy to explore its deep and tangled recesses, to drive the wild boar from its lair, and surprise the wolf in its fastnesses; yet this path, these rocks, this fountain, are all new to me."

"None visit this spot but me," replied the duke, in a low and solemn voice; "the door through which you passed without observing it, opens only to my hand."

Rudolphe advanced into the centre of what appeared to be a natural opening in the forest,

enclosed in a wild way by rocks, through whose fissures trees of all growth and colouring seemed to have forced their way. A basin, scooped in the rock, received the silent waters of some unseen spring; a pale light gleamed on its surface through the overhanging boughs. The spot was lonely,—melancholy perhaps, from its stillness and shut-in remote air; yet the grass was fresh and the water clear, and there were flowers too, wild pinks and violets, and the blue harebell, and thornless alpine rose that asks no sunshine, but like the human bud, blooms every where.

A jutting rock afforded a seat; the duke reposed a moment, sunk in thought, and then, as if awaking from a trance, said, “I have tried to lure the birds here, but they will not come. Years ago, one of foreign plumage and unknown song found its way over the rocks, and seemed to take to the spot and luxuriate in it; but it comes no more.”

“And yet,” said Rudolphe, “there is nothing in this sweet and quiet spot that should scare away the forest warblers.”

“Nothing!” exclaimed the duke; “but we are come here to talk of other things, matters of high import to us both: sit down and listen to that

which I am going to reveal to you. *Giulietta* is not the daughter of Count *Frederich Gortzen*; of that I have a deep and intimate conviction,—nay more, proof undeniable. Whose, then, can she be?”

“Some one, doubtless, in whom the princess—
But I dare not glance that way.”

“What think you,” cried the duke, his eye kindling, “if I prove her to be—”

“O, nothing base!” exclaimed *Rudolphe*, in violent agitation.

“Mine own! The age, the date, the name of *Bertha*; your mother’s sudden coldness and guilty terrors; the living testimony of air and feature, all form a mass of evidence which we must lose no time in verifying. But first you must be made acquainted with a story of the past,—a mournful one, of which I would not willingly, yet must be the narrator.

It matters not how or where I first beheld her; she came to me like destiny—unlooked for, unthought of. I saw the danger, and would have fled; but she stood beside it, and I remained immoveable. Young men are apt to vaunt the beauty of their mistresses. I never did so; she was

too lovely for the painting of mere words. Your mother saw her in her early freshness, and knows—for she has felt it—how cold and speechless was her own boasted splendour, when opposed to the young radiance of my gentle Isolina. Giulietta resembles her in the tone of her voice, her eyes, her smile, and the nymph-like turn of her head: I thought so when I first saw her,—I feel it now.

“ I loved once, and for ever; never other love had touched my heart; but I was high and proud, standing within the circle of dominion, but paled out from that of happiness; and she was only wise, and innocent, and beautiful. She fled from me, and then I found that princes have hearts like other men. I followed her, but it was long before I discovered the retreat in which she had buried herself; I drew her from it, and she consented to become my wife in secret.

“ I will not speak of that dream of happiness,—I cannot dwell on it,—I never could believe it real. None knew of our union but my sister; nor she, until important reasons rendered the communication necessary. I then believed her such as she seemed to be, and told her all; but I have since thought that she dropped cunning poison into my

wife's ear, and made her feel more acutely, than in her unbounded love she would otherwise have done, the uncertainty of her position. As the time approached when I expected that she would bless me with the name of father, her melancholy increased; and though she never uttered a word either of expostulation or reproach, yet when any thing fell out in conversation which touched upon the fragile tenour of woman's fame, or the usual sad result of concealed marriages—the entailed dishonour which became the melancholy birthright of the offspring of such inauspicious unions, her lip would quiver and her cheek whiten, as if every word had a dagger in it.

“ Wretch that I was ! I saw this, saw the slow hectic of the heart consuming her young beauty, yet listened to the paltry pride which, fostered by Herminia's skilful management, spread its vile tares amongst the better seeds of tenderness and honour. And yet, man never loved as I did; even while the wicked arrogance of my nature was in its most insane force, I still had moments of compunction, moments when I felt sensible of the iniquitous feebleness of my conduct, and resolved to atone for it. And then—though I could see that her sweet

gaiety was gone, and that her cheek grew thin and hollow, yet never did the idea of danger present itself to my mind, (I speak this in truth, not in extenuation,—my crime admits of none) ; besides, the means of reparation seemed always in my power, and though I weakly delayed the period, yet did I always mean to do my Isolina public justice. It is thus that we unwisely reason, counting upon the time that waits not for us, but is gone with all its promises, ere our tardy determination can half come up with it.

“ It was the eleventh of September : there was a ball at court, and Isolina, who usually shunned such scenes, was obliged to be present at it, the place she held necessitating her attendance on the princess who that night made her first public appearance since the death of your father, killed, as you know, at the hunting of a boar in this same forest. Herminia rejoiced to enter again into the world ; but too adroit to manifest a questionable feeling, had given to her dress the brilliancy which she repressed in her eyes, and was serenely or mournfully beautiful, as suited the occasion. A host of worshippers, who thronged to bask again in the sunshine from which they had been so long

excluded, encircled her chair, nor were suitors of lofty pretensions wanting amongst them ; but while she seemed to listen to their homage, her eyes sought those of the Archduke Albert, who stood apart from the crowd in rapt though obvious admiration—but not of her. A few years before this period, Duke Albert had admired your mother, as gallant men naturally do ladies of distinguished beauty ; and once at Vienna, when the Polish Princess Alexina de Radzivil was talked of as the finest woman in Europe, observed that he who thought her so could never have seen the Princess Herminia of Herpsberg. These words of praise, carried back to my sister, sunk deep into her memory ; and when the archduke, after a lapse of some years, revisited Herpsberg, she felt that she had not forgotten them. Again at liberty, and perhaps more beautiful than when he had first seen her, the projects of aggrandizement, which circumstances had suspended, instantly quickened into action, and she entered the ball-room with the fixed determination of advancing, by every means with which nature and occasion had furnished her, by the power of charms hitherto deemed irresistible, and of skill which knew how to turn a chance into

a certainty, the dream of her ambition,—a close alliance with the house of Austria.

“ But behind Herminia stood one whose beauty threw even hers into shadow ; and no sooner had the archduke looked on Isolina, than he seemed no longer to recollect the presence of the princess. And yet she was not what she had been but a little while before ; it was another, but less dazzling kind of loveliness. Her eyes were full of melancholy sweetness, but they no longer sparkled with that innocent radiance which I believed to be peculiar to them until I saw *Giulietta's* ; and the bright hectic that flushed her cheek but ill supplied the place of the charming bloom which anxiety had stolen from it. If a smile of obliged courtesy played for an instant on her beautifully chiselled lips, it seemed to have no business there, and quickly passed away like those sudden lights in the heavens that look out through darkness, and are the next moment shrouded in it. Her shape, too, was enveloped in a rich shawl, which the princess permitted her to wear under the pretext of indisposition ; yet even thus changed and concealed, her extraordinary beauty broke out through the cloud that overhung it, and inspired the arch-

duke with a sentiment of admiration which he took no pains to conceal.

“The princess was visibly hurt, but smiled, as was her custom when any thing particularly disturbed her. I saw her a moment after withdraw from the circle, and speak for an instant with the Countess Walstetten, her most trusted friend. She then passed on with a soft word to her favourites, or a gracious movement to the general crowd, and was soon engaged in conversation in another saloon. Meanwhile, the archduke approached Isolina, and having caused himself to be presented by the Countess Walstetten, who stood near, entered into conversation with her in an earnest tone, obviously expressive of the profound impression which her exceeding loveliness had made upon him.

“‘But,’ (said the countess, who was one of the privileged, and said every thing that suited her purpose, without ever appearing to have one,) ‘you do not tell us what your indisposition is,—has it not a name? Every one asks why you wear that frightful shawl, and hide yourself when any one looks at you.’ Then in a whisper, audible to those who stood near,—‘Really, my dear, you ought to dance, were it only to refute the

abominable stories which the envious circulate. Do you know, they actually say that you are dying for Werner; and some add, have positively married him! Only think, child—a dancer! what ineffable disgrace!’

“ I was engaged in conversation with Field-Marshal Munck while all this was passing, and neither heard nor saw any thing: but I learned afterwards, that on hearing the name of Werner, Isolina started up in horror, and shaking off indignantly the hand by which the countess held her while she uttered her perfidious pleasantry, rushed out of the ball-room. Those who saw her pass, were terrified by the frightful paleness of her cheek and the strange look in her eyes, so bright and awful (as they said) that some followed her in fear. Others would have assisted her, but she pushed them away, and had just reached the entrance of the princess’s apartment, when life seemed to quiver within her; she sprang upwards with a strong convulsive moment, and then dropped down senseless.

“ Some minutes afterwards confused reports of illness, of danger, reached my ear, coupled with the name of Isolina. I hurried from the ball, and

glided through a passage, only known to myself, to the chamber of my beloved. They told me that she lived, though still insensible, and that in the first moment of returning sensation my presence might be fatal to her. Herminia was there, and the Countess Walstetten, who knelt beside the couch of Isolina. It was Herminia who spoke to me, but not until she had forced me from the chamber. I would have staid, but she insisted roughly, talking of fright and danger. I retired to an adjoining cabinet, where she left me for a little while, but soon returned, saying that Isolina had recovered her senses, and entreated me to retire to my apartment; that knowing I had gone to rest, she should feel more tranquil. The crisis (my sister added) was past, sleep was already overcoming her, and the physician pledged his life for her safety, if she was suffered to remain in perfect repose.

“ I knelt down before the closed door, and fancied that I heard her breathing gently; my heart blessed and prayed for her. My sister continued to entreat me; ‘ If she should hear you sigh, (she said,) she will know that it is you, and her agitation will destroy her.’ I submitted. Herminia promised to come to me when Isolina was com-

posed enough to see me with safety ; she was herself greatly agitated, and as she closed the door, saying, 'Have courage, I shall bring you back good news,' the sound of her voice frightened me.

"For some time, a profound silence seemed to reign within the palace ; hours, I believe, passed, but I know not. I threw myself on a couch, but could not remain there a moment ; I rose and paced the chamber ; motion seemed to allay the tumult of my soul. I dared not think of danger, and yet it stood like a giant before me ; I would have passed it, but it filled up every avenue. 'Good God ! (I cried) why does this horrible phantom threaten me ? My sister said there was no danger,' and at the word danger, my whole frame shuddered. Suddenly, a light gleamed on the opposite wall ; my window was open, I looked out ; it came from the Countess Walstetten's apartment, which was above mine. I heard sounds, and saw shadows flitting ; my anguish rose almost to madness. I would have rushed through the gallery, but there stood the princess, pale as a shroud.

" 'Not this way,' she cried, seizing my hands and forcing me back to my chamber, 'not now. You will kill her if she sees you thus.'

“ ‘ Kill her ! ’ I exclaimed, with a dreadful foreboding, ‘ is she not dead ? ’

“ Herminia took my hands, and kneeling before me, burst into a passion of tears. She would have talked of comfort, but I thrust her from me ; she started up, and seized me boldly. I knew not what I did ; I would have killed her in my rage, but her physician entered, and saved her from the violence of a wretch phrensied with grief and terror.

“ It is needless to dwell on the protracted agony, the mental bereavement, and still more deadly consciousness that followed. Herminia patched up—I know not what—some fabricated tale which concealed my real situation from the public eye, and told a story of my Isolina’s death so feasibly devised, that all believed it. Her discreet reserve and virtuous dignity had so set her above suspicion, that the most profligate ribald of the court would have felt shame at blending her pure name with the idea of dishonour. For me, too, as I now believe, Herminia exercised her prompt invention, wickedly prompt in this cruel instance. On that dreadful night my Isolina gave birth to a daughter ; so far the princess, compelled by cir-

circumstances needless to detail, acknowledged ; but the child, she solemnly averred, lived but a few minutes. This tale, propped up by others which served to give it colouring, I entirely believed, having then an unbounded confidence in my sister, which many things have since tended to weaken ; though until your disclosure, the idea of her having injured me so cruelly never crossed my mind. Since then I have put together various circumstances to which I had never before given weight, and the result is the profound conviction that *Giulietta* is my daughter.

“ And now to prove it, (continued the duke rapidly, perceiving that *Rudolphe* would have spoken). No interruption—I know what you would say ; you cannot believe your mother so deep in guilt. Your scruples do you honour ; but if *Giulietta* be not the daughter of *Isolina*, whose then is she ? Most certainly *Herminia*'s ! and then how much blacker every way the sin, how much more criminal the abandonment ! ” The prince shuddered, and the duke, after a moment's pause, continued, “ I well remember the death of the physician—he, I mean, who was there on that terrible night—and how your mother, in whose household

he had long been, visited him in his last moments, and remained by his bedside till all was over. I thought the act a pious one, but now believe it to have been dictated more by dread of a disclosure than by Christian charity. Be that as it may, proofs enough remain without having recourse to doubtful evidence.

“At the time when my Isolina was torn from me, there was a woman in the service of the princess, whose errors and whose beauty had acquired for her a painful celebrity. Herminia had discovered this person in a state of utter destitution; had pitied, protected, and finally placed her near her person. Bertha,—for so she was called, her real name I never knew,—devoted herself with all the energy of a passionate and grateful nature to your mother, who seemed to take pleasure in bringing her forward; but immediately after the fatal event of which I have just now given you the melancholy details, she disappeared, and never again returned to Herpsberg. It was known that she had married General Luckner, and supposed that the princess's wishes had influenced the veteran's choice; but nothing more was heard of her.

“ Compare this disappearance and its date with the contents—as you have repeated them to me—of her letter to the princess, in which she refers directly to the circumstance of her having deposited with the curate of Oriana the child whom *Hermia* herself had a few years before consigned, in the helplessness of infancy, to her care. Compare these things together, and weigh them well; your mother’s fear of discovery, and her evident conviction that *Giulietta* is that child. Is it not as if the dead spoke? And look,” continued he, taking something from his bosom, “ look at these eyes; have they not been saved from death to testify to the truth? Is it not Providence that allows the soul of a mother to speak through them, bearing sacred and irrefutable witness to the identity of her child?”

Rudolphe received with reverence the small case which contained the feeble type of *Isolina*’s beauty. “ It would seem to me, (said the duke, as he gave it to him,) that other proof is needless.”

“ Proof!” exclaimed *Rudolphe*, gazing on the portrait; “ why this is proof! and strong as a voucher from another world. It is the finger on the wall, the star in the heavens!—but what motive—”

“ O, we shall find that too,” interrupted the

duke, "and without digging deeply. From information which I received after we separated last night, I have reason to think that your mother is aware of your discovery. Her proud soul, impatient of humiliation, bolsters itself with false hopes; but concealment will not long be possible, and then how full, how terrible will be her punishment!—disgrace to a mind nurtured by homage little short of adoration, or the solitude of a convent to one who has never known the solace of religion!"

"Full indeed!" said Rudolphe deeply affected; "and I devoutly hope expiatory!" And as he said this, he felt how terrible it is to sit in judgment on the actions of a parent.

"And now," said the duke, "let us return to the palace. But I see that your mother's shame tugs at your heart: true, you are her son, but I—her victim."

"And I!" thought Rudolphe, but was silent.

"Let us begone," urged the duke impatiently. "I have arrangements to make which require dispatch. In an hour I shall expect you in the chamber where we met last night."

Rudolphe bowed, and rose to follow his uncle; but the duke stopped short, and pointing to a nar-

row stripe of grass, over which a lonely cypress threw its shadow, "She is there!" he said, with an expression of profound grief; "she, who was so young and beautiful! I raised no monument to her memory; she was an enemy to pomp, and loved the garniture of nature. And this spot—it was her favourite; often have we sat together under that tree, and she has sung to me with that voice of love and sweetness which never other mortal had, and talked of her far-off home, and of the dead who were in heaven, and, as she believed, watched over us. I dare not think of the contrast; I dare not look beneath that turf,—the horrible process of mortality frightens me; but I look upwards; I see her in the heavens; even now——But of this no more. Farewell, my wife! dearest and best beloved, farewell! Plead for me in heaven. When I return, I will bring with me our daughter to pray upon thy grave, and thou wilt bless her from the hollow of the tomb. Farewell, my love!" again he repeated, and kneeling on the turf, kissed it fervently; then rising slowly up, quitted the melancholy spot, and hastened to hide himself in the recesses of his palace.

No doubt remained on the mind of the duke, but he desired to have his proofs confirmed beyond the possibility of dispute by the testimony of the Countess Walstetten, whose retreat he soon discovered. A severe illness had totally destroyed her beauty; her wit had gone out of fashion, and she had long been the forgotten inhabitant of a retired house in a remote quarter of the city, remembered only by the princess, who dared not forget her. The duke visited her in secret, and partly by the authority of station, strengthened by a threat of public exposure, and partly by working on a mind not entirely hardened, obtained the desired confession.

She was the sole depositary of Herminia's secret, (the physician was but half informed,) the only one to whom the princess had disclosed her hatred for Isolina, and the indignation which boiled in her veins at the idea that the pure current of her brother's blood should be contaminated by an obscure alliance. She had nursed her hatred till it had become vengeance, whose constant fuel was the allowed pre-eminence of Isolina's beauty.

Good minds cannot conceive such things, they have no sympathies with such hateful feelings;

yet, I fear, they are not sufficiently out of the course of nature to be altogether without respondents. The princess looked upon Isolina as an intruder, who had stepped before her in the race, and been adjudged the wreath woven for herself; its consecration was "To the most beautiful," and another had presumed—not to seize—but worse, to wear it, without valuing, or even being sensible of its possession. Thus were the two great springs by which Herminia's mind was worked,—pride of birth and vanity of beauty, brought into action; and well knowing that should the duke's attachment continue, he would sooner or later avow his marriage with Isolina, she had tried many means to separate them, or at least weaken their mutual affection. None had succeeded: the duke's love was stronger than his pride, and Isolina, though intensely sensible of the disgrace of secrecy and abashed into wretchedness, loved on. But it was only at the moment of her death that the idea of concealing the infant, and thus at once putting an end to a romance which had lasted far too long for the patience of the princess, suggested itself to her angry mind, unconciliated even by the aspect of death; for though tears burst from her eyes, and

terror at the duke's despair whitened her cheek, there was no sorrow—no compunction.

Perhaps some interest for her son might have hastened her determination ; of that she spoke not, but it was taken and executed at once. She felt that no time was to be lost ; her knowledge of the duke's character made her well aware, that should he know himself to be a father, the first act of his justice and despair would be to acknowledge his marriage and his child. The Countess Walstetten introduced Bertha into her own apartment, where the infant was given up to her care, with a solemn charge of secrecy, and an order to withdraw immediately from Herpsberg. She did so, and in the retreat assigned her became known to General Luckner, a retired officer of honourable reputation ; who partly from attachment, and partly in obedience to the princess's wishes, soon after married her. He died when Giulietta was little more than three years old, and Herminia dreading that Bertha's tenderness for the child might at some future period be the means of divulging her secret, insisted on a total separation.

Bertha obeyed, and the princess soon received the assurance of her having quitted the country,

after having first deposited her charge in safe and honourable hands. Herminia, glad to shake off all responsibility and to get rid of a harassing recollection, inquired no farther; and the lofty-minded Bertha, not knowing that she had been made participator in a crime which her soul would have abhorred, kept the secret religiously, sacrificing to a strong feeling of gratitude, the sole tie which could have renewed life within her worn-out heart.

—V.—

It was on a bright and balmy evening, when nature held high festival, when the woods still rang with the exulting song of the birds, and the flowers which had budded the day before spread out the rich exuberance of their full-blown beauty, that a cavalcade was seen through the broad-leaved chestnuts descending the Italian side of the Alps, holding their way gaily, sometimes with unsafe speed, at others with enforced, but ill-brooked caution, along one of those winding roads which the labour of man has shaped and convolved as if in opposition to the divine negligence of

nature. On they came like gallant hunters, leaving their courtly equipages far behind ; the sun shining above their heads, and the ground mantling into beauty beneath their feet, as they left the cold north behind them and came down into the sunny Eden of Italy. Of Italy! the very sound has beauty in it; my senses cheat me if there be not something in the aspect of that antique land akin to what the gifted dream of paradise. Perhaps—for I am fanciful, and apt to look at things through the prism of the imagination—that others may not feel as I do, when, having passed the stony ravines of the Alps, the soft and perfumed air blows upon me, and I see the marks of southern vegetation coming at intervals, as the weeds and berries floated towards the vessel of Columbus, giving the cheering promise of the looked-for land,—then does my heart dilate, and if I do not speak poetry, at least I feel it.

But Rudolphe was too deeply in love, and Duke William too happily absorbed, to care for nature, though she stood before them in her best attire, craving the favour of a look, which neither had leisure to bestow upon her. The reveries of a lover, who after a constrained and tedious absence touches on the moment of reunion with the mistress

of his heart, are no longer vague. He dreams of positive and immediate happiness, and the scenes which nurse the visions of the absent, the solitude whose repose awakens memory, or the sunshine whose brightness creates hope, are alike unnoticed.

It was the hour of amber clouds and long shadows, when turning round an abrupt corner, our travellers caught a view of the spire of Oriana. I shall say nothing of beating hearts—it is a subject that I always treat clumsily; nor yet of longing eyes, for the same reason. Rudolphe took off his hunter's cap, and holding it as a screen against the long rays of the setting sun, looked into the distance. The duke looked forward too, but thoughtfully; in the young mind hope and certainty are one, but the old know the interval which separates them, and dread it.

It had been known at Oriana on the preceding evening, that the young prince was coming to fulfil his vows to Giulietta. He had written her a letter of love, the pith of which Gioconda had communicated under the seal of secrecy to all the village; and those who saw Giulietta's pale cheek blush and brighten when his coming was spoken of, thought what a quick balm was love, when

hope was mixed with it; better than that of Gilead—or Mecca either; but of the last the Orianites knew nothing. Even in her wildest moments Giulietta had been a universal favourite in the village, because—as the good folks never failed to observe—her heart was better than her head. But in her sorrowful ones, she had become an object of the warmest interest; not a tongue in the valley that had not reviled the prince—the forsworn prince,—who had deserted, and, as they never failed to add in the spirit of idle exaggeration, killed the sweetest maiden that ever the sun of Oriana shone upon. But now the tide had turned; and changing like the barbarians of Melita, he whom they had believed a murderer, became in their wild minds a god! It was who should be the first to hail the good prince, to bid him welcome and take him news of his beloved; and so, that none might seem wanting in allegiance, it was agreed to make an idle day of it, and that all should march off in procession to meet the duke and his nephew, and bring them to Oriana in the best kind of triumph they could get up, taken as they were at a pinch.

In Italy, a show, be it what it may, is usually

effective, the regalia of nature is so fine and fête-like ; and then the good taste of the people, who turn every thing into picture, just as nature does with their vineyards, and sometimes with their old walls, unseemly things in other countries, but there warmed into life by the vegetable beauty which clings and clusters about them.

Giacomo Pozzi, the lame boy, and his infirm mother, were, except three or four old bedridden folks, the only members of the community left behind in the village : the plague could not have cleared it more effectually. There were no beadles, at Oriana ; but if there had been, a legion of them could not have regulated the obstreperous curiosity, the joy, the excitement of the good people, who all marched out determined to see the whole affair from beginning to end. And assuredly there was enough to make wiser heads than theirs wonder. A prince of the house of Herpsberg coming to claim the hand of a village maiden ! and with the sanction of the duke—the proud duke ! who would fain have made companions of the stars, nothing on earth being good enough for him.

“Truly,” said Gioconda, shrewdly enough, “he must well know who our Giulietta is. Think ye

that he would give his nephew to the handsomest lass in Christendom, if he believed her of no better blood than the vine-dressers' of our village? No, verily. And who knows, after all, but *the King's Daughter* may be nearer the mark than we fancied? who knows—" here the large lacquered fan was spread confidentially before the face, stifling a communication of which nothing but the words "archduke, emperor," were audible.

Giulietta sat on a bench at her door, and watched the procession. As it faded from her sight her cheek grew pale, and her eyes filled with tears; the excitement had been too much for her, and as the first fever of joy subsided, the weakness of nature became visible.

"You tremble," said Gioconda. "Dearest love, look up. We must have no tears, no pale cheeks, when the prince comes. If he should find thee changed—"

"Fear it not," interrupted Giulietta; "he will always think more kindly of me than I deserve. And now, dear mother, let us come in; my heart beats teasingly. I would lie down awhile. Nay, do not look frightened; joy does not kill. Tomorrow Rudolphe will be here, and we shall sit

together on this bench, and admire the bright heavens. The past will then seem as a dream."

"And an ugly one enough it has been," said Gioconda.

"Ay, but the future," said Giulietta; and they entered together into the cottage.

Nothing so much offends profound feeling as publicity. The well-meant pageant displeased the duke and annoyed Rudolphe; but both were too happy to be severe, and so received the good people of Oriana with well-assumed cordiality. But when the procession had arrived within the gates of the castle, they both contrived to slip away droightly, and taking a short road to the curate's dwelling, were within a few paces of it before the musicians, who formed the van, had arranged themselves in the great court for the performance of some wonderful symphony got up for the occasion.

It was already evening, and the amber clouds had turned to grey, when the well-known porch, with its thick roof of jessamine, and its tracery of leaves and tendrils embedded into the slight pilas-

ters, appeared before the travellers. But there were red streaks yet in the west, and the light emitted from them played on the casements of the cottage, giving it the air of being gaily illuminated.

Our cavaliers entered—first the curate's study : it was vacant. Then the small parlour, which *Giulietta* used to call her own : the window was open ; there was some unfinished work upon a table, and some fresh-gathered flowers, but nothing living.

“ They have walked out,” said *Rudolphe* ; “ the evening is so beautiful.”

“ Doubtless,” said the duke. “ And yet at such a moment——But I hear a sound ; there are voices in the garden chamber.”

“ Voices ?” repeated *Rudolphe*, advancing rapidly. “ Thank God ! I did not like this stillness, this sullen welcome.”

“ It is the priest,” said the duke. “ He repeats his breviary.” The impatient *Rudolphe* advanced a step beyond his uncle, and pushing open the door—entered.

I have begun this story, and so I must go on with it. I wish I had not. I knew and loved

Giulietta, and now, alas! it is left to me to describe the interior of that garden chamber, where her faithful lover, and he who longed to press her to a father's heart, stood like two death-struck wretches on the threshold. Where shall I begin?

She was there, Giulietta—or what had once been her,—for the beautiful soul was gone! There, pure and pale as monumental marble, and cold as death! her long hair parted on her calm fair forehead, her hands gently clasped, and in her bosom some violets still fresh, gathered by herself an hour or two before when she talked of that morrow—never to come for her!

There she lay—the old priest reading from a book of prayers, while tears rolled slowly through the channels which time and sorrow had furrowed in his cheeks,—it is dreadful to see the aged weep; and beside the bed sat Gioconda, her head buried in her knees, her hands clenched across her forehead, in the attitude of utter desolation; while more distant, and as if afraid to intrude on grief more sacred than their own, were Giacomo Pozzi and his sick mother,—the woman on her knees, and the son with his face pressed against the window, weeping bitterly.

“So soon!” exclaimed the priest, as the door opened. “Good sirs—”

“Be comforted,” he would have said, but the words stuck in his throat; and losing all command, he sobbed aloud.

It needed but a sound to unlock the sluices of Gioconda's grief; she started up, her white hair, from which in her first despair she had torn the head-cloths, hanging on her shoulders.

“Lord have mercy on us!” she cried, “what a sight is this! But she cannot be dead; a moment since she spoke to me. Dead! Giulietta dead! O no, she is too young to die. I said it was but a trance; I knew it. I told the father so; but he is old and fearful. See how he weeps—but how silent you are all! Speak to me, my child, my Giulietta!” and then in a whispering tone, “Rudolphe is come; the prince is here,—give him thy hand. O God! how cold it is. My child! my love! you do not speak to me!” Then, as if the dreadful truth had come for the first time upon her, she uttered a horrible shriek, her eyes rolled, and she—a simple peasant woman—looked in the greatness of her grief like the crowned Hecuba, the mother of a dead race of princes.

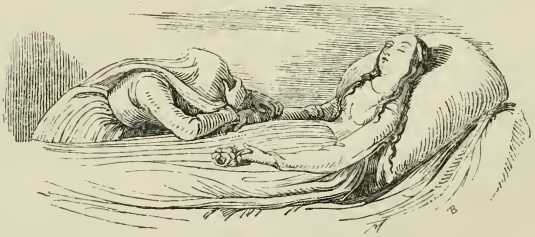
But Rudolphe ! what was all other grief to his ? Faint and feeble words ; and the drying up of life, the entire, certain, utter hopelessness—how shall I paint it ? Not at all—not at all. There are feelings for which no outward sign either of speech or colouring has been yet invented. Poor wretch, who was so full hope !

The duke had advanced a few paces into the room, and there stood motionless as marble ; a deadly paleness on his brow, and in his eyes a strange fixedness, a stony glare, as if the life had left them. Suddenly the sound of music was heard, and the trampling of light feet, and the shouts of a rejoicing crowd. The duke started.

“ Let us pass,” he said, in a low whisper, “ let us pass. The ball opens. Who is that with the princess ? Sir, she is my wife,—you smile : I swear it on the honour of a knight. I have a daughter too, exceeding fair as they say. Duke Albert loves her—but that’s a secret, my sister’s secret some one said. How soundly the young lady sleeps ; good sir, stop the music,—it may awaken her. I thought she was my daughter ; but they say not, now ; they took her mother from me,—my Isolina ! Reverend sir, I thank thee for the offer :

let us begone !”—and he passed rapidly from the room, beckoning to the astonished priest, who followed him.

From the hour in which the fair corpse of Giuletta was committed to the earth, Rudolphe seemed to have vanished from it ; till then he had watched beside the bed of death, and when the grave was opened, he was there. But when they sought him, he was gone—and none knew whither.



THE ROC'S EGG.



THE ROC'S EGG.



It was my fortune, commune to all age,
To love a ladye faire of great degree,
The which was born of noble parentage,
And iset in highest seat of dignitee,
Yet seemed no less to love, than loved to be.

Fairie Queen.

O place and greatness, millions of false eyes
Are stuck upon thee !

Measure for Measure.

“YOUR hall,” said the false Fatima to the illustrious Badroulbador, “is nothing without the *roc's egg* hung up in the centre.”

“And life,” cried Harry Grey, “is nothing without honour.”

“Or honours,” said his simpler-minded brother.

“As you will,” replied Harry carelessly. Six hours afterwards he had left his native town many miles behind, and was rattling away on the top of the Durham stage along the high road to London.

At this period the ancient capital of the county Palatine was very striking, with something like a highland glen in the middle of it, now perhaps built upon, like that once green dell vulgarly called the dry ditch of Edinburgh, which I am told, for "my eyes have not seen it," has been wrested from the washer and bleacher-women, and being given over to man, smokes away like the other quarters of auld Reekie.

Besides this glen, which was a beautiful feature, Durham had (and no doubt has still) among its settings off, the grand cathedral air, the purple and scarlet, prince-bishop, and lord-cardinal odour, almost beyond any other of the old and high ecclesiastical cities of England, whose historical records are bound up with those of the church by a golden girdle, on which Pomp has engraved the words "Power and Glory," and Piety those of "Fortitude and Sacrifice,"—and "Glory" too,—but in other characters.

But of its beauty, or its dignity, Harry took no note; and though his eyes were moist when he saw the chimneys of his father's house disappear behind a round hill, up which he had often clambered in his childhood, yet his plans—for he flat-

tered himself he had plans—soon dried up the home drops, and effaced the home recollections. And yet,—but I must get more into order, or I shall never arrive at the end of my story.

Harry Grey was the second son of a worthy man, of sound sense and a rare heart, himself the sixth male offspring of a poor clergyman, who thought it a white day when he chanced to stumble on an old schoolfellow reputedly established as a draper in Durham, who offered to take his son Henry into his house and bring him up to his trade without requiring the customary remuneration. Henry Grey was grateful and diligent, and the old man took to him as if he had been his son. He was amiable and handsome, and the old man's daughter, Miriam, soon showed, with the innocence of a young heart which had not learned to disguise its feelings, that she shared in her father's kindly dispositions towards him. In short, things took the usual course, and the master's daughter became the partner's wife.

Miriam Grey was a charming creature: the epithet is hackneyed, but she really deserved it. She had so much beauty and natural good breeding, that her name was often cited in circles far

above the quiet one in which she moved; and when the belles of Durham were the subject of a stranger's inquiry, "O, you should see the draper's wife," was always sure to be the answer.

But Miriam thought little about the effect of her charms: her heart was as pure and beautiful as her face. She loved her husband, idolized her children, called her duties her enjoyments, and felt that they were so; and though in idea she sometimes wandered into a more poetical world than that in which she habitually moved,—for there was a touch of romance in her character,—yet *virtually* she never strayed either in heart or person from the home circle which her presence blest, and her example benefited.

But even Miriam was not perfect,—alas! who is? Simple in her habits, bounded in her desires, where she herself was alone concerned, yet for her children she felt something,—in short, she was ambitious. I have said that her personal wishes never strayed beyond the precincts of her garden, or her fire-side, for the tincture of romance before alluded to was merely a gentle indulgence of the mind, that left behind it neither desires nor regrets. Indeed, she believed herself to possess more of the

settings-off of life than she merited,—but for her sons! It would have been vain to have said, “What can you reasonably desire for your children beyond that happiness which you yourself possess?” Glories of all colours danced before her eyes when she mused on their future destiny, and the idea that the happy lot, which with heart-felt gratitude she acknowledged hers to be, should be theirs also, pained her more than she dared to acknowledge even to herself.

What a fountain of tenderness is a mother's heart! Scorched, shrunk, dried up though it may be by misfortune and sorrow, still the spring of maternal love gushes out freshly. Our children are to us love, hope, memory; they absorb the present, form our future, and are the links which unite us with the past. A woman's life seems to date from the time that she becomes a mother; and yet it is then that she ceases to live for herself,—that her soul passes, like that of the dervish in the Arabian tale, into the body of another. O mystery of tenderness, that outlives all which kills other affections!—absence, time, ingratitude, even the disgrace of its object,—all, every thing! Lovers and friends may hate those whom they have adored

and confided in,—they do hate them sometimes ; but a mother cannot hate her child, even her guilty prosperous child ; for the guilty and unfortunate one comes like the prodigal home at once to the heart, which while it has followed the course of error may have wept blood, but not gall.

A reader of story-books having advanced thus far in mine, would here naturally enough exclaim, “What a digression! and without purport, too; no carrying on of the plot, no bearing on the subject.” Alas! it is all true; and if the day of ‘gentle readers’ had not passed away, I should address him (or her) pithily. But as appeals of this kind are no longer in fashion, I can only say with Cervantes, or it may be Sterne, for I am not sure which, that “my pen governs me, not I it.”

But to return to the point from which we started. Miriam had two sons: the eldest, William, was frank and gentle, and while yet a child had shown a marked preference for a country life and the soft beauties of pastoral scenery. His delight was in bible lore; the lone valleys, the tents and cedars of the patriarchs, had charmed his infant fancy, and made him view the loveliness of nature as something holy, and the shepherd-life of Israel's

sires as the one in which the bounties of Providence had been earliest and most beautifully manifested. He preferred the Book of Ruth even to the "Wonderful Lamp;" and when his mother gave him Thomson's *Seasons*, had soon doubled down all the happy pictures of rural life which were in accordance with his particular turn of mind.

Harry Grey, the younger brother, read Thomson too; but neither the sheep-shearing, nor the hay-making, nor even the gleaning, with "the lovely young Lavinia" herself in the midst of it, interested his fancy; while Hampton Court, and Sheen, "delightful Sheen," and

"Clermont's terrac'd heights, and Esher's groves,"

and all the courtly scenery of Richmond Park, the pure Thames, and the right royal Windsor, heated his imagination and made him long to breathe their perfumed atmosphere.

His gentle mother would often scatter seeds in the too ready soil; and when his father sometimes reproved the soaring fancies of the boy, would say with a sweet half-exulting smile, "You will have no difficulty, my love, in doing as you like with William; but you will never make a draper

of Harry." To which prediction the kind and good man usually assented with a forced smile, for it was not in his excellent nature to pain his Miriam even by a judicious dissent, when it might seem like an opposing feeling.

And so they grew up, not rough and smooth like the two renowned sons of the Emperor of Greece, Orson and Valentine,—but the one calm and wise, the other wild and ardent. One strong sentiment united them in feeling,—the sentiment of affectionate respect which they felt for both their parents, and which softened into tender admiration when they looked at their fond mother.

But Miriam died—as we all must; only she went before her time, and so left the image of her sweetness and beauty, as it was in its early freshness, in the memories of her husband and her children.

Children seldom know what their mothers have been; they forget the fair face that hung over them in infancy; another has effaced it, with the cares of the world, and perhaps the disappointments of the heart, written on it. The gentle, happy caresses of a young mother are changed—in some for the anxieties of a guardian, in others

for the vigilance of a sentinel; and the counsels of experience, even when enforced with mildness and judgment, want the charm with which youth binds up its rhetoric.

To stubborn minds the tenderest tutelage seems arbitrary; while there are others so beautifully constructed, that a wish, rather indicated than expressed, suffices for their guidance. It was thus that Miriam's children felt; theirs was the education of love, and they would have seen in their mother's wrinkles, had she lived to wear them, only a more sacred call upon their hearts: they would have always loved her, and the feeling of abiding tenderness would have been refined into a holier sentiment, as they beheld the links of life slowly relaxing, and the space of time which they had yet to pass together lessening to a point.

As it was, they both grieved deeply for her loss—deeply and lastingly,—but with this difference; William struggled with his sorrow that he might comfort his father, but Harry cherished his, and would mix up with it recollections of his mother's beauty and high-mindedness, that seemed to solace him in the midst of his afflictions.

The widower of Miriam did not live many years. It is difficult to resign one's-self to the loss of such a companion as she had been to him. Perhaps he gave way to grief; but all that I know is, that he too died, and was buried beside the sweet creature whom he had loved so dearly. And their sons, one being twenty and the other a year older, finding themselves each in possession of a respectable fortune, amassed by honourable industry, resolved to adopt the plan of life most congenial to their views and wishes; and to forward his, William purchased a farm in a cheerful situation, and with every facility for carrying on the agricultural projects in which (having disengaged himself from trade) he wished to embark his portion.

Harry, as we have seen, chose the top of a stage-coach as the first step of the ladder by which he meditated mounting up to all possible dignities; and when he was firmly seated on it, and had given one strong and tender squeeze to his brother's hand, his good brother, whose heartfelt farewell the pang of parting had rendered inarticulate, he felt as if the goal of his ambition was already attained. And yet—I am now at the period from which I first set out, and must account

for the slight impediment which this *yet* seemed to throw in the way of his ambition.

Harry Grey wrote sonnets to the moon, and to the stars, the morning-star, and the evening-star, and the polar-star, and other heavenly bodies ; and invocations to the Oreades, and the Dryades, and the sylvan deities in general. He loved to wander in the woods by moonlight, or at the golden hour of the setting sun ; doated on music, but loved it most when “ married to immortal verse ; ” had dwelt on Werter till he had become enamoured of suicide, and studied Schiller till he had convinced himself that he was of the true rock from which the robber Moor and the rebel Wallenstien, those splendid incarnations—the one of a generous nature outraged into crime, the other of a loftier and more magnificent ambition—were hewn. He had been known to shed tears at hearing certain Hungarian waltzes played on the barrel-organ ; and stood convicted of having inscribed the name of Rousseau on a tablet in his father’s garden, with a distich upon man and nature under it.

Besides all this, he had mastered Italian ; knew the loves and fortunes of all the princes and poets of the middle ages ; had sympathized with Cino

da Pistoia who, when young and as yet unknown, had dared to love a fair and noble lady, the sweet Ricciardi dei Selvaggia, for whose loss neither riches nor honours could afterwards console him ; had mused on Boccaccio's passion for that graceful, graceless beauty, Mary of Naples, and the deeper love of Tasso for Leonora d'Este ; till finding himself in absolute want of an idol, and having neither noble lady or great princess at hand, he had fallen in love with a girl prettier than half the princesses in Europe put together.

Fanny Middleton was a person of decided fashion in the eyes of Harry Grey, who, with all the seeds of aristocracy about him, had never come in contact with any thing more aristocratical than the manifold daughters of his father's five brothers ; of whom two were curates, one a half-pay captain, another a lieutenant of marines, and a fifth a London attorney. Whereas Fanny was the daughter of a colonel, and besides, her mother's father was brother to a Scotch peer ; but both had been extravagant in their youth, and the colonel's death having deprived his family of the means of living in society, Mrs. Middleton had retired to a cheap village a mile or two from Durham, and

being a woman of strong sense, and a large purchaser in the way of experience, had courageously brought down her views to her resources.

They were extremely limited, but her health and temper were good, and her spirits cheerful, and it was with more of gaiety than regret that she fixed herself in a cottage in the middle of a piece of waste ground, which she soon converted into a charming flower-garden; and with the help of some taste, a little paint, and a great deal of neatness, contrived to give to her humble dwelling that air of refined, yet simple comfort, for which our English cottages are so remarkable.

I have forgotten how Miriam Grey and Mrs. Middleton became acquainted, but probably by some act of kindness on the part of the former. Mrs. Middleton, who in early life had been at the fag-end of an arrogant family, who had run the gauntlet of caprice, and suffered all the inflictions with which the overbearing love to visit the unprotected, felt and valued the sincere and unpretending excellence of Miriam's heart, and had too much good taste not to be impressed by the graceful simplicity and natural dignity of her manners. In short, the draper's wife and the colonel's widow

became *real* friends, (there are three kinds of friends, Champfort says); their children grew up together, and the memory of the beloved Miriam and her good husband was cherished at Rosebrook with unceasing affection. Was any one praised for grace or beauty, elevation of character, or domestic excellence, Mrs. Middleton would fondly recall Miriam's image. "Ah, (she would say,) I once had a friend as much above the person you speak of in loveliness, as she was beyond all others in virtue. Poor dear Mrs. Grey! There was beauty,—and such a sweet mind with it, such an angelic nature." And in these, and similar expressions, would give vent to a blended feeling of tenderness and admiration which death had in no degree weakened; and thus Fanny grew up in the midst of impressions so favourable to Miriam's family, that its name became naturally blended with all the early fancies and affectionate feelings of her heart.

Mrs. Middleton had (as I have already observed) learned to shape her ambition to her fallen fortunes; and, having strong feelings and an independent

mind, preferred the activity and freedom of her humble life to an irritating dependance on the inactive good nature or mortifying caprices of her rich and noble relatives. With these feelings, precarious health, and the ever-present consciousness that from her small pittance she could not hope to lay by even a decent sufficiency for her daughter, her wishes naturally turned towards the good, the sage, the noble-minded William Grey, just about the time when the fair Fanny's had taken another direction.

Harry was not so handsome as his brother, whose manly figure and fine countenance had much of the pure and noble regularity of ancient Greek sculpture; but he had that which girls of seventeen admire much more than a fine outline or a serene expression,—eyes full of wayward fancies, of thought and sweetness, with a beaming smile which his mother had given him, along with her delightful voice and air of distinction. He had no particular reputation for beauty; but people said as he passed, “How very gentlemanlike Harry Grey looks; such good style, and such an intellectual head; so very original and interesting,—no one could suppose him to be a draper's son.”

Fanny's heart was not the last to re-echo these eulogiums; she had read enough of poetry to know that Harry Grey looked like a sunbeam, or a moonbeam, she was not sure which,—sometimes one, sometimes the other, and that all his brilliancy and all his tenderness were reserved for her. And no sooner had she made this discovery, than she suddenly felt convinced that her ever liking any one else was out of the question; indeed no one could have a second attachment; of that Harry had assured her, and so she assured her mother, who was always the depositary of her secrets.

“But Harry is scarcely twenty, my love,” said Mrs. Middleton; “his views are vague, his character unformed. Now William—”

“O, but neither William or I care about each other.”

This was unanswerable, and so after many grave discussions and heart-stirring appeals, it was at last arranged that if in two years Harry Grey and Fanny continued still of the same mind, and that his lofty speculations had sobered down into something more tangible, they should be united.

Fanny was a sweet-tempered, quick-minded girl, with a healthy sensibility of heart and a sunny

cheerfulness of spirits, that had together stolen into her eyes, and made the prettiest play there imaginable. Her step was buoyant, her voice music, her laugh joy,—like the laugh of one who relied on hope, and had never heard of its deceitfulness. Her throat was long and flexible, with a graceful undulating movement when she turned her head that had something of stateliness in its fine-drawn delicacy; but the sweetness of her look and manner seemed to court affection, and when Harry bade her adieu, it was with the firm conviction that nothing like her charming self had ever existed.

That evening,—I mean the evening of his departure, Fanny sat at her window, and leant her cheek upon her pretty hand, and looked like Juliet in her balcony, as she watched the clouds that passed over the heavens, obscuring as they swept gently along the fair crescent moon that hung above, and thought of her “gracious Romeo,”—“her dear lord,” and would have begged a voice of the nightingale,

“To lure her tassel gentle back,”

and went so deep into romance, as to gaze on the

green lane that lay in the moonshine at the bottom of the garden, until she fancied it the great London road, and the hay-cart which struggled through its ruts creakingly the London stage-coach; and there she sat watching its toiling wheels as they rolled heavily along, until a sudden 'gee-heugh,' and the cracking of a cart-whip, dispersed her gentle reveries.

Harry too had his moonshiny dreams, his fair visions of futurity, in which love and ambition, bound up in one idea, soared upwards like the Austrian eagle, with a head looking each way. But in the midst of his high and teeming fancies, it is but justice to him to add, that Fanny's image stood on the summit of the stars and garters, cornucopias of gold, and patents of nobility, which his imagination had heaped together till the pile had fairly made way for itself through the dim unsatisfying atmosphere of probability, into the paradise of dreams. Perhaps he had never read the story of the Persian glassman.

The very circumstance of her having pleased his fancy, gave Fanny's beauty an ineffable charm in the eyes of her adorer; for Harry believed himself to be one of the most discriminating judges of

female loveliness afloat, and could discuss the warm yellow hair of Titian's donnas, the long eyelid of Raphael's virgins, the timid graces of Leonora d'Este, or the courtly ones of Surrey's Geraldine, most scientifically; preferred the long Egyptian eye to the full Circassian one, knew the turn of Miss Jennings' lip, and the form of Lady Castlemaine's eyebrow; and loved court beauties—Mazarins and Longuevilles, Richmonds and Hamiltons—as well as Horace Walpole himself. No one ever talked as he did about things of which they knew nothing; he would have discussed the political economy of the stars, had he been a political economist; but as it was, beauty was his theme, and love, and poetry, and music; and having taken Fanny for his idol, he no longer doubted her surpassing all which the frequenters of haunted streams, the moonlight visitors of the deep forest, or those who love to gaze upon the starry heavens at midnight, had ever dreamed of. By turns she resembled Dante's Beatrice, and the Miranda of his dear Shakspeare; sometimes the Saxon Elfrida, or Mary of Scotland in her rosebud days; at others fair Rosamond. I think he leant most to the last, but was often divided between her and

that Princess de Conti, whose ravishing beauty had—like that of the fair Portia,—brought wooers from all corners of the earth. They were not, probably, at all in the same style; but there was no resisting the temptation of a comparison with that particular star, of whose portrait the Prince of Tunis, or of Fez—I have forgotten which,—the Moorish prince (mark the romance in the word *Moorish*) had become enamoured.

In short, he had long settled it in his mind that modern times had produced nothing like Fanny, and that all others of her sex looked, when near her, as the scentless and gaudy tulip does opposed to the chaste yet glowing beauty of the perfumed rose. Of this he was more than ever convinced when, on his arrival in London, his uncle, the attorney, presented to him in rotation his five daughters,—prodigiously fine girls as they were called, but in his eyes vulgar, demonstrative, and full of that flashy anxious show off, which announces the minor boarding school as legibly as the blue board and gilt letters.

Before an hour had elapsed, he was aware of all their accomplishments. Miss Grey, as the eldest was always called in her family (for having been

baptized plain Sarah, after a rich godmother, she was happy to claim her right of seniority, and smother her Christian name) had attitudinized a few movements of the newest shawl-dance; Miss Augusta Wilhelmina touched her harp, the tender Emmeline her lute guitar; Julia Louisa had sung "No, my love, no," quite as well (her mother said) as Miss De Camp; while Frederica—*my brown beauty*, as the same active matron playfully styled her youngest daughter—displayed her collection of varnished screens, poonah drawings, and flowers painted on velvet, which last were descanted on as finished specimens of an elegant art in which the gay creature particularly excelled; quite a fashionable accomplishment, and (as Mrs. Edward Grey rather incautiously observed) acquired with facility in three lessons.

Fanny had her attainments too, but they were of another kind; and Harry Grey had too much natural taste not to be disgusted by this premature exhibition. But when evening came, and that, putting on their showy bonnets *knowingly*, the cousins proposed a walk in Red Lion Square, (where their honoured father's mansion occupied a snug corner,) and dividing into parties of two and

three, placed him in the middle; while the most active manœuvrer of each flank company used her skill, when a quick turn favoured it, to whisk round to his side, he suddenly made a vow to see as little as possible of "those vastly fine girls, the Greys,"—and kept it; resisting manfully pic-nics at Norwood, white bait at Greenwich, and even a tiffin on board an Indiaman, with a perspective of attar of roses and hookahs. For the purser, "pa's particular friend," was (Miss Grey observed) the most generous creature in the world, and always gave them oceans of nice things whenever they went on board the Ganges.

And now Grey was launched in London with money, talents, a distinguished appearance, and an earnest desire to get on. But how to begin? Three or four months were spent in answering this question.

In all such matters, *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*; but this *premier pas*——! Many obvious ways presented themselves to Grey, by which his talents might be exercised and his fortune improved; but then they were obvious ways, and required time and industry. But he wished for immediate elevation, (a rail-road upwards,) a seat

in parliament, a high place under government, an important diplomatic station, &c., &c., totally forgetting that he had neither interest nor connexions, and that whatever his abilities might be, he had not yet given proof of possessing any.

By chance this very thing occurred to him one idle day; and having nothing else to do, he sat down to write a book. Possessing considerable facility, he soon completed two neat volumes of three hundred pages each; but to write a book was nothing,—to get it published was the difficulty. No one would undertake it; the subject was worn out, the ground over fed; the style might possibly be good—every one now wrote well,—but publishers were continually obliged to refuse highly creditable performances, &c. At length Grey, thoroughly convinced of the merits of his work, published it at his own expense; and found, to his utter astonishment, that it hung on hand just as his bookseller had predicted. However, he consoled himself with the reflection that had he condescended to cater for the public taste, or lowered his style to its appetite, he should have succeeded, and that in fact he had given a gem to the cock, who (wisely enough) would have preferred a barley-corn.

Of how many persons, who in their day obtained celebrity, might it be said that they had much in their minds which never entered into their hearts, which never lodged there, never was made holy in the sanctuary. Their works are like "mailed angels," fresh, gorgeous, glittering in their bright and beautiful armour; but they have not the amazing power that one undressed thought has, when it comes out in its loneliness from the living temple. Perhaps this thought was not in Grey's book; perhaps circumstances, or the colour of the times, was against it; at all events, he found a solace in his vanity,—that staunch friend to those who have no other flatterer.

"After all, (said he,) the *Paradise Lost* was sold for ten pounds. Grey was burlesqued, and Sheridan's *Rivals* received sentence of death on its first appearance: a better taste reversed that sentence, as it may, perhaps, reverse others. Decidedly, patronage is the great point. Who knows, if Mecænas had never lived, whether the *Eneid* would have found its way down to us?"

A dinner at his publisher's was the sole result (disappointment excepted) of Grey's literary efforts.

Young and unknown persons should suffer themselves to be drawn out, or at least employ their tact to seize on favourable moments not already bespoken by authorized monopolists. Grey forgot this sage precept, and found that even when the subject discussed happened to be one of which he had an intimate knowledge, no one listened to his observations. Mr. A. took the lead, Mr. B. followed, Mr. C. opposed, Mr. D. assented; one was a high political character, another a wit, a third dexterous. Poor Grey had the bad tact to put a question to one of those great men which he could not answer, and from that ill-starred moment a deaf ear, a half smile, or a marked expression of impatience, was all that he could obtain.

At this memorable dinner much was eaten, and much discussed,—arts, sciences, wines, political economy, general literature, and gastronomic improvements. Some maintained the honour of the portly turbot, the deliciously flavoured lobster-sauce, and the immortal saddle, but still kept the top-stone of the pedestal for the *lively* turtle,—so little known on the continent, that strangers often

fancy it one of our native luxuries; while others mutinied in favour of the more scientific *entrées* with which the peace of Amiens had recently enriched our festive catalogues. Grey took no part in these discussions, and having already received some marked repulses on subjects more within the scope of his talents, lay on his oars, but ever on the watch to redeem the ground which he had lost.

At length sprung up an argument on the respective merits of the classical and the romantic style of dramatic poetry; yet scarcely an argument, for the latter was not then so firm in its seat as great and widely circulated names, sent abroad in various languages and impelling by their weight the current of popular opinion into a new channel, have since made it. That the mighty one of Shakspeare had consecrated the imaginative drama, was allowed; but it was denied that a shred of his mantle had fallen upon his successors of modern times, and unanimously opined that nothing less than his glory could efface his broad and—as some said—monstrous offences.

Grey, whose admiration of Shakspeare was a wholesale feeling which admitted of no parcelling off, recoiled as from some horrible heresy. Besides,

he loved the dance of song, the irregular fire which flashes, burns, dies away and then blazes out again, far better than the sustained equality of unimpeachable verse, into whose flame (so ran his argument) one might, like Shedrach, Meshach, and Abednego, walk untouched, for it had neither heat or action. He allowed that the Greek tragic poets had made prodigious use of the passions, both terrible and tender, wielding gloriously the great elements of power,—grandeur, pathos, expression, and the piercing instinct of moral divination; and though shackled by the unities, and unaided by the knowledge of those secrets to which modern dramatic art owes a portion of its illusions, yet attaining by the force of intellectual strength the “eminent mount” to which the road, though smoothed, seems now so difficult of access. But he denied the claim of their modern representatives to the same ground. “Bring forth,” he continued, with warmth, “the great master of methodized tragedy,—Racine himself, and oppose him to the mighty one of antiquity. Does his marble—beautiful and exquisitely polished as it is—palpitate with life like the half-chiselled blocks of the great Athenian? No; his works are like the

statues of a sculptor whose mechanical powers are more eminent than his inspirations, who labours at the surface, softens the details, rounds the forms into beauty, and with his own breath blows off the last dust. But Eschylus, like Michael Angelo, (himself the Eschylus of sculpture,) poured in the life-blood, which, finding its own channels of circulation, gave vitality to limbs and features left unfinished by the chisel. Men have quaked at things in a translated Eschylus: who ever quaked at any thing in an original Racine?

“Few,” he continued, “who have been content to subjugate their powers to the rules of classical—or as it is called—legitimate drama, do more than give back the images impressed on the mind through the medium of sensation, without piercing into the chaos of the soul, separating its elements, or striking out light and life from its unsounded depths;” and he likened such minds to a mirror, clear but void, aptly receiving the form set before it, and reflecting it in perhaps a heightened and more lucid beauty, but having no power to produce an original image.

The word *original* was cavilled at; none were original; the existence of the creative faculty

denied: all drew (it was asserted) from the same open sources.

“Agreed,” said Grey, “the ore is there, but men coin it to their fancies.”

“Ay, but in imitation of visible images.”

“Combined from them:—so far is true. But he who from known materials, accessible to all—the handled, sifted, common stock—selects, blends, and strikes out new forms with the touch of life, the mark of truth, the countermark of nature on them, may wear the word in his cap.” And then Grey would have returned to Shakspeare, and have disburdened his mind of its upswelling thoughts and passionate fancies; but an indifference, compared with which opposition is encouragement, chilled though it did not silence him.

Grey was not yet an effective reasoner. He was too prone to generalize his ideas patiently to suffer analytical criticism, too diffuse to command attention, and too bold in his decisions to argue, or perhaps examine, closely. He felt the difficulty of his position, but still maintained it—though single handed—against more experienced polemists, accustomed to dress their arguments scientifically, and furnished with the charges of grossness, distortion,

false taste, artificial feeling, and all the thronging sins of what the speaker called an "overleaping imagination." To which last expression Grey calmly replied—

"I know but of two boundaries which the imagination may not overleap; that of good taste, which includes truth, decency, and much besides, and that of interest; for it is not allowable for us to be vague and wild till the wings that follow us are weary."

It certainly was not Grey's intention to make a speech,—he even believed himself uttering common sense; but the remark appeared to give offence, and to increase the feeling of contemptuous mistrust with which he appeared to be regarded.

Presently, a supercilious-looking person with a broad vacant face, who sat immediately opposite to him, said, in a jibing tone, "Pray, sir, may I be permitted to ask if you write verses?"

"Not professionally, sir."

"Ah! an amateur: 'lines to Laura, by a young gentleman,'—he—he," said the sneerer with a flat titter. A neighbour whispered something. "Ah—'signed Veritas;' a bad signature, as old as Junius: does not go with the times." Then turning to

Grey with a sort of leer, "Sad dogs, those reviewers, sir; right, though, generally. But I must say, and upon my honour I think,—[here a look of dignity as flat as the titter,]—that they have dished you up rather *saucily*,—he! he!" at which wretched pun, if pun it might be called, a brace of dinner-hunters (the punster was a sort of *Me-cænas*) laughed in their chins, as clever people do when they have seized the fine point of a witticism.

But Grey was nettled: coldness he could bear, but not ridicule. "You are wrong, sir," said he warmly. "I have not the honour to be the author of the admirable pamphlet to which you allude. I should feel proud to have written it; every page is a mine of eloquence, sound argument, and moral courage. Like the Levite of Ephraim, the writer has parcelled out his wrongs, and sent them to awaken vengeance amongst the tribes of the earth: the cause he has espoused is a holy one, and he fights for it, like the crusaders of old, manfully, with the mark of his faith upon his breast. No shifting, no back-path left open to escape by, no compromising cowardice; but the fine sentiment of entire reverence in his heart, and on his lips the noble courage of belief. That book, sir, will be

read, remembered, quoted, when you and I have been long forgotten."

"Mr. Smith, may I have the pleasure of drinking wine with you?" said the Sunday Mecænas, bending forward towards an angle of the table. Mr. Smith bowed assent, at the same time smiling significantly: the smile said very explicitly *fudge*, and no one replying to Grey's tirade, the conversation took another turn.

It was a trying day, and Gray felt the disappointment of his hopes too severely to risk another chance. There he was perhaps wrong; but provincial talent, like provincial beauty, is often presumptuous, and spurns the level to which it finds itself lowered when it becomes competitor with the mighties of a capital. It tries to usurp,—fails, and retires lacerated from the tribunal of public opinion, perhaps at the moment when the legitimacy of its claims might, if persisted in, have been acknowledged by a favourable verdict.

That night it occurred to Grey that he was in the wrong track, and something that sounded like the sweet voice of Fanny Middleton seemed to whisper in his ear, "Return to Rosebrook; a heart that loves you, an affectionate circle, independence,

the privilege of usefulness, and leisure to cultivate powers too prematurely exercised, await you there. What more can the heart of man desire ?”

But the *roc's egg* was still wanting ; and after a perturbed night Grey rose, sickened of literature, but in the full determination of attacking fortune in some more accessible quarter, and effacing by future distinctions the humiliations of the night before.

The afternoon was beautiful, and Grey had walked thoughtfully along for a considerable time, carried forward by the current of Oxford Street, without in the least knowing where he was going to ; and even when the fresh country smells and singing-birds might have told him that he had left the human stream behind, he still walked on, probably enjoying, though not knowing that he did so, the charm of distant sounds dying gradually into silence, and the sweet-scented air which blew upon him from the neighbouring fields. When suddenly awakening as from a trance, just as he had reached the Bayswater gate of Kensington Gardens, he entered ; and gliding into a side alley

that seemed safe from intruders, threw himself upon a bench, and soon sunk into a second reverie, from which he was abruptly roused by the approach of voices.

Two young ladies were advancing up the walk, robed as goddesses might be for earthly adventures, and as belles are for Kensington. Both had the high stamp of fashion on them, the not-to-be-mistaken *mélange* of delicacy and confidence. The eldest was well made and well dressed, with a dark French eye which could perhaps have dispensed with the glass every moment applied to it; the youngest was a beauty,—a professed one,—but with a fresh radiance that threw a fine natural splendour over her whole figure, and prevented her air of consciousness from being offensive. As the ladies passed, Grey looked up, and started when his eyes met those of the beauty. Probably his countenance betrayed the surprise which so fair an apparition caused him, for she evidently blushed, and as she turned with her companion to join the elders of the party, who lagged a little behind, looked away disdainfully, as if she would obliterate the impression which the blush might have made.

But she had blushed, and Grey had seen it ; and having traced her charming form to the coronetted landau which waited to receive it, he returned to his solitary bench, and dreamt of birth-night balls and court beauties, of Lucy Hyde and Sacharissa, till twilight, and a hint from the guardian of the shades, sent him back to his lodgings in Maddox Street to continue his musings.

The next day he thought of Kensington Gardens, and of the bright creature in the robe of soft muslin and fairy slippers, oftener perhaps than in wisdom he should have done ; but he thought more of Fanny Middleton, and sincerely wishing not to mix any other image with hers, turned his footsteps towards the Borough, having some business to transact in a remote quarter.

Are we to suppose that it was destiny which, as he returned from thence, pushed him into Astley's, where some popular battle-piece—no matter what—was running its course of splendid turbulence? At all events he entered with the crowd, and had not long taken his seat, when the door of a private-box near to him opened, and the vision of Kensington Gardens entered, preceded by half a dozen children, who crowded into the front

places, and followed by an elderly gentleman and the short-sighted friend of the day before.

By a singular chance, (Grey thought,) her first glance was directed towards him; it was a careless glance, but one of evident recognition; and though it was not repeated, yet there was a certain play-off of beauty, which he had the vanity, or weakness, to imagine was intended for himself. His eyes were rivetted to the box, and Napoleon folded his arms, looked through his telescope, spoke with brief emphasis to his aides-de-camp, or galloped across the stage in vain; neither redingotte grise, or petit chapeau à trois cornes, could lure his attention even for a moment from the shrine of his new divinity.

If the children laughed, which they did often and heartily, he grew suddenly romantic about the adorable simplicity of the great; if they looked grave, and followed with serious anxiety the jumble of incidents which at Astley's is called a plot, their air of deep thought and beautiful attention excited his admiration,—such cultivated minds, so finely and susceptibly organized! Children as they were, yet their high blood (he remembered the coronetted landau) spoke out in every movement;

and then their simple attire—vulgar children were so overdressed; besides they never shed tears without roaring, and their laugh was so coarse and deafening.

In short, they were mere pipe-clay compared to the delicate japan on which he gazed adoringly. But who were they, this family of sylphs? The shortest way of knowing this would have been to have examined the box-keeper's book; but what were box-keepers to him, or he to box-keepers? All he thought of was to catch a nearer view of the lady of his thoughts, and for that purpose he took care to quit his seat at the first symptom of muffling, and to throw himself, as if by accident, in the way of the bright mystery as she passed through the vestibule.

Here again chance seemed to favour him. As the party approached, one of the children, having encumbered herself with an extra shawl, dropped her gloves, which Grey picked up and restored with a well-bred bow. The vision inclined her head gracefully, though slightly, and said in a soft bewildering tone, "Thank you, sir,"—words which Grey for a long time afterwards considered as poetry.

As the party approached their carriage, the fair star (still leaning on the arm of her friend) said, "In a few days we shall be at lonely Dalreith." And then followed something about winds and waves, which Grey rather guessed at than heard, for the charming speaker had vanished before the conclusion of the sentence.

"Dalreith," however, remained upon his memory, and his first care was to purchase a map of Scotland; the sound, he thought, was Scotch,—it had something heathy in it, and feudal, and—I know not what. His next was to examine it minutely; but nothing like Dalreith was traced upon it. He then tried Wales, next Ireland, and last of all, England; but no such spot could be discovered through either clearer or magnifier. The Court Guide never occurred to him; had it done so, he would have easily found it there, and have learned the family name and honours, with Burlington Street; Dalreith Castle, Fyfeshire; Midhurst, Bucks; and Oak Farm, Twickenham, tacked to it.

But Grey thought as little of Court Guides as he had done of box-keepers; it was not his mode to seek for intelligence through ordinary mediums, and having failed in those to which he had had

recourse, he was in despair,—and yet he knew not why, for certainly (as he frequently said to himself,) he had not the most distant idea of visiting this “lonely Dalreith;” indeed, why should he do so? he who could never love any one but Fanny Middleton? and loving her, he certainly could have no wish to follow a stray meteor. Yet still he felt a sort of curiosity, a—in short, there was something so singular in their meeting twice,—and then the blush, and the “thank you, sir,”—it was altogether very remarkable.

But when an idle mind falls into curiosity, something worse is usually at hand, and Grey had discovered Dalreith, and was on his road to it before another fortnight had elapsed.

This mysterious Dalreith was an obscure hamlet on the coast of Fyfe, with a public-house in the middle of it, where accommodation might be found for the half-dozen visitors who occasionally came there from the neighbouring town to enjoy sea-bathing in its highest perfection. It had little about it that could be called country, nothing but a long stretch of pebbly strand and a high back

ground of rock, with a wide wild heath stretching off from it.

At the distance, however, of about two miles, was a valley covered with soft herbage, but bare of trees; and through it rushed a foaming stream, and cattle fed upon its banks, and yellow broom grew amongst the fragments of rock which had come from one knew not where, and lay scattered about on the carpet of fresh green turf. Upwards from this valley rose a bold hill, the foremost of a chain that stretched its indented line across the horizon; and on its brow stood a castle, a chieftain's castle, turreted and bastioned, with moat and draw-bridge, and warder's tower; and, cresting the sunniest rampart, a hanging terrace with a lady's garden on it full of bright exotics and sweet southern perfume. From the castle walls a forest of black pines swept boldly down to the base of the hill, where a wild meeting of many waters troubled the silence of unvisited nature.

The lord of the castle was called, in the phrase of the country, "Dalreith," but in civilized regions the title of earl was added to it. He had been twice a widower, was a man of common mind but gentlemanlike manners, vain, worldly, and what is

called good natured; proud of a very handsome daughter who governed him, and indulgent to four little children the offspring of a second marriage. He had a son, too, his eldest child; but he was in Germany, visiting courts and silver mines, and cultivating the good graces of princesses and prima donnas. But of him I know—and therefore shall say—nothing.

The daughter was, as might be predicted, the fair incognita of Kensington Gardens, who had reluctantly accompanied her father on a visit of necessity to his northern estates, and who having nothing to do, and being a person of elegant pursuits, cultivated flowers on her rampart garden, read Rousseau, corresponded with five dear friends and one confidential sympathizer; and further amused herself by turning the head of the village minister, and bewildering the sentimental son of a neighbouring half-pay captain, both of whom she had unsettled for life in the course of the Sunday dinner to which they were condescendingly invited on the earl's arrival. But one was a prig, and the other a simpleton, and neither were noticed on the following sabbath, when Grey made his appearance in the church of Dalreith.

Lord Dalreith was charmed to see a stranger of distinguished figure, who looked as if he was aware of *town* and town topics, walking up the aisle. Having worn out the ear of both his chaplain and physician, who had got into the way of sleeping out his political diatribes, he was just then desperately in want of a listener; and kindling at the idea of such a lucky chance, bowed courteously as he passed Grey in the porch of the church.

“It is the gentleman who picked up Charlotte’s glove at the theatre,” said Lady Emily, in an obliging tone.

The earl remembered nothing of the glove; but he bowed acknowledgment, and requested to have the honour of seeing *the gentleman* at dinner. Grey, repressing his exultation, bowed in return, and accepted the invitation with as much calmness as he could command in so intoxicating a moment.

At the appointed hour he presented himself at the castle, fashionably but simply dressed, sat next to Lady Emily at dinner, noticed nothing, though all was new to him, discussed the opera, the music of the day, and the merits of the composers and performers most in vogue, with taste and science; spoke with fervour of poetry, which he really

loved, and with skill of pictures' which he had never seen; seized with an instinctive tact *le difficile facile* of fashionable manners, ventured to beg a rose from a tree which Lady Emily herself had planted, and had the growing boldness to place it in his bosom with one of those moonbeam looks of which Fanny Middleton was perhaps at that moment dreaming.

But it is needless to go through the grammar of looks, or to dwell on the spells composed of far other ingredients than

“Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,”

with which the beautiful Emily bewildered the brain, and bewitched the heart of Grey. Love's breviary was his only lore, its illusions his faith, its image his religion. At first, the memory of Fanny Middleton mingled itself upbraidingly with his ambitious dreams; but by degrees the impression became fainter and fainter, until at length he had worked himself up to believing that he had merely fancied her because she was the first pretty girl who had fallen in his way. And then, a heart of nineteen was a boy's heart; but a heart of twenty-one was a thing to be relied upon, a trea-

sury of holy writ, a strong coffer double bramah'd, opening only to one key, though a thousand were tried in it, &c. &c. Fanny was certainly a very pretty girl, (here a sigh would sometimes escape before he was aware of it,) engaging too, and for a downright country-girl, particularly well bred. But Emily Dalreith! O, she was like nothing that the earth owned! a creature of the sun, the sky, the stars! something from an unknown and wondrous world,—so pure, so radiant,—like the forms that minister to poets' fancies, or the embodied light of the morning!

Thus would he rave aloud to the woods, and to the waves, and even to the walls of his solitary chamber, whenever his swelling soul happened to be cribbed within its limits. At grey of morning, in the cold night-hours when the stars were up, he was abroad, watching the rising light as if it were the emblem of his destiny, or questioning

“The far off, high Arcturus;”

(for, like other children of fortune, he believed in astrology, and had a planet of his own,) or wandering amongst the dark pines homaging their congenial gloom, and crying aloud, like the pro-

phets of old, to the mute company of trees and listening rocks. Nor was it alone her beauty that he glorified ; but her mind, her delightful mind—

That seraph's wreath,
On which the common dew turns into gems
By the divine collision,

as he himself had said in some poetical conceit of which she was the subject, if not the inspiration.

“ Who ever (he would say) was so natural in heart, so elevated in mind, so pure in action,— [here the waves murmured, and the woods sighed assent,]—loving mountains and forests, and poetry and moonlight, as if she had never known of any thing beyond the wilds of Dalreith, and yet so high bred, and so beautifully disdainful when it is becoming to be so?”

The history of Scotland had grown into his favour, and expelled the romantic legends of the middle ages, and the German ones of the thirty years' war. He thought no more of the beautiful Valentina of Milan, or of the sad Imelda ; nor yet of the noble, pure, devoted Thekla—the woman-angel. The lost and desolate ladies, Gonzagues, Medici, d'Estes, Lambertazzi,—wedded and unwedded,—once the worship of his soul, shared,

the same fate ; he thought no more of them, but only of Mary Stuart, or Helen Irwin, or that glorious girl of the house of Douglass who made a bolt of her arm to save King James from his assassins ; wore heath in his breast, sung “ Yarrow Braes,” and the “ Flowers of the Forest,” and “ Bonnie Doune,” and others of tender and mournful melody, with a simple pathos which few eyes could resist. Never had tenor so sweet and touching vibrated on the ear of a nymph of quality. Wood-nymphs may have heard such sounds at still of evening, breaking out from the close thicket, or the green hollows near the reedy brook where sylvans and fauns, and all the merry people of the woods, pipe ærial music ; but to court-nymphs, who know not the secrets of the forests, such sounds are strangers.

He often fancied that as “ the course of true love never does run smooth,” his might not always flow in the same full and gentle tide in which it had hitherto glided along. Too vain not to be sanguine, the idea of inconstancy on the part of the adored never once occurred to him ; but then she might be wretched, and made so by him ; and to this thought he sometimes held with a melancholy

complacency, which an ordinary lover might have fancied had more of vanity than passion in it. In his moody moments, when the sky was dark and the waves billowy, he would stray upon the shore, watching the sea-gulls as they lowered their flight, and then suddenly bearing upwards, whitened in the wild light that an opening cloud, or a struggling sunbeam sent down upon them. Then he would hum in mournful measure the "Farewell to Lochaber," or repeat Burns' heart-felt strain,—

" Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met,—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted,"

with an expression of passion and tenderness worthy of the poet who put his heart and soul into his verse, and which Grey owed rather to strong emotion than to deep feeling. Sometimes he would look across the ocean towards the far-off land, which (luxuriating in melancholy fancies) he had brought himself to imagine might be that of his future and voluntary exile were his hopes—he did not say ambition—blighted, though nothing would probably have shocked or surprised him more than

such a dire necessity. For to a mind touched—not imbued—with romance, life's crosses are not altogether unlovely; but often full of silver tears, and sighs of poetic perfume, though growling black-muzzled dogs enough when approached too closely.

But in point of real, present, every-day vexations, there was one which no chemistry of Grey's fancy could turn into poetry. He had begun to apply to his good father the circumlocution of Covielle, in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*:—"Lui, marchand? c'est pure médisance, il ne l'a jamais été. Tout ce qu'il faisait, c'est qu'il était fort obligeant, fort officieux; et comme il se connaissait fort bien en étoffes, il en allait choisir de tous côtés, les faisait apporter chez lui, et en donnait à ses amis pour de l'argent." He had grown romantic too about prince-merchants,—Medici and others, who sent out their ships to every port in the known world, and recalled them laden with all that was most rare in nature and refined in art. But the earl had a way of inquiring about his family—not that he cared or waited for an answer,—only it was a way he had; and when he did so, Grey's dreams mouldered into rubbish, and he almost prayed for annihilation.

“A high name, *Grey*,” he would say. “Are you of the Stamfords, Mr. Grey? No, by the by, I think you said you were of the Howick branch. Well, they are all good. Come, my angel, give us a little music: Mr. Grey will join you in my favourite barcarole.” And then Lady Emily (who took Harry’s pedigree for granted, never fancying that even chance could have thrown her into plebeian contact) would sit down to the piano; and after preluding lightly with her lily fingers, breathe out some exquisite air, with all the giving up of soul, the cadenced richness, of southern expression.

She had the true Italian *gosier*, was a pupil of Grassini’s, and pronounced the charming language in which she always sang as if she had learned it from Petrarch or Metastasio; and Grey, who felt music in his heart’s core, would join his voice to hers, and they would together make set notes and measured harmonies seem like the sudden impulses of joy, hope, tenderness, and sorrow, rejecting the feebler mediums of expression and bursting out in song.

But every thing must have an end, and this dangerous companionship, this wandering on the sea-shore, botanizing on the hills, dramatizing the

passions at the piano, and poetizing on the ramparts by moonlight, terminated one raw winterish morning, when Grey, with his sorrowing heart in his eyes, placed Lady Emily beside her father in a travelling-carriage, which a moment after took the road to London, amidst adieus and sighs, and indescribable looks, that spoke and promised volumes.

Grey remained a few days at Dalreith, indulging in the lover's luxury of lingering on those spots where he and the bright lady (as he was wont in his fantastic moods to call her) had been used to stray together. He was just at that point in his romance when tender natures find it more delicious to recall, than even to anticipate. Memory is the paraclete of the fond and trusting spirit; when shadows darken round us, we fly from it. Grey was so almost sure of cause for hope, that he forgot its dreams; but the past might fade away from him, and he returned to it for ever, gathering it into his bosom, and nourishing it there with a jealous care that allowed no other interest to mingle with it.

His delight was to stray upon the pebbly shore, picking up shells and throwing them back again

into the ocean, watching the skimming sea-gull in its lonely flight, or the fisher's bark as it stole homewards; or standing motionless upon the garden rampart, looking long and wishingly towards the happy south,

Where she, who had his soul in her dear keeping,
Speded to her gay home; while far behind,
Within the sea-side cave, whose sullen roof
Seemed inlaid as with stars when she was there,
He mused alone, communing with the past.*

But some insufferable girls, who called him the handsome stranger, and flung themselves for ever in his way, made the inn which was their mutual residence so insupportable, that he threw himself into the first conveyance that offered, and was gone—as one of the girls (who had lived in a garrison-town, and subscribed to a circulating library) observed—“like the breeze of the desert,” without giving fair play to their amiable intentions.

In the month of October there is little to be done in London; so Lord Dalreith merely paid a flying visit to his town establishment, and then

* MS.

hurried down into Berkshire, where he proposed remaining until his political duties brought him up again.

Grey being uninvited, could not follow him ; and though it would have perfectly accorded with his romantic notions to have hidden himself in some neighbouring farm-house, and fed on the air that his goddess breathed, and cheated the tardy hours of absence by the fond thought that, though she knew it not, he still watched over her like her guardian spirit, yet delicacy forbade the indulgence of such a fancy. So he returned to London to admire the sudden majesty of the dense fog when an unexpected sunbeam clears its way through it, touching its dark volume with a yellow light as it rolls off slowly and solemnly ; to skait (if so it pleased him) on the Serpentine, or drop in at half play at Drury Lane or Covent Garden.

But Grey did not love skaiting, and was far too fashionable to patronise the winter theatres, and yet so utterly unknown in the circles into which alone he desired to be admitted, that the delicious little dinners which the great men, whose official situations retain them in town, give to the talented ones who only flourish in its atmosphere, were as

inaccessible to him as Almack's to the usher of a grammar-school.

What then did he do? Why for the first month he lived, like a German astrologer, alone in his chamber, gazing on the stars and questioning the planets. But his landlady, a widowed milliner, with a showy person, some hundred pounds "and possibilities," ogled him with such a fixity of purpose day after day as he passed the open door of her show-room, that, seized with indignation and horror, he took the opportunity of her absence on a Sunday pleasure-party, and depositing the amount of his debt on her table, packed himself and moveables into a hackney-coach, and took refuge in an apartment safe from the attacks of ogling *modistes*, but which happened to be also out of the reach of planetary influences. This he regretted, for the stars had become his companions, and the narrow stripe of sky from which his apartment in S—— Street borrowed light, scarcely allowed play-room for a single twinkler: but there were no milliners, so that the drawback was more than balanced by the equivalent. The stars once shut out, Grey turned into a more sub-lunary track, and instead of studying the aspect of

the planets, gave up as much of his thoughts as he could spare from his love-dreams, to the grand object of making what are called *advantageous acquaintances*.

By *advantageous acquaintances* he did not mean such as might be really useful to him in a worldly sense ; nor yet those in whose society new ideas might be gained, or latent thought developed ; qualities were out of the question, all that he desired was a name,—if possible a title, but at all events a name, a fashionable or a high one ; a card to lay on his table, “ a particular friend ” to throw out as a safety-rope by which to draw in others who might be afraid of Mr. Nobody Grey’s contact, but could feel no alarm at being claimed as an acquaintance by the friend of Lord M——, or the Hon. Mr. D——.

To attain this stepping-stone was, he conceived, essential to his chance of success with Lord Dalreith, whose name he never failed to bring in on every occasion, and in a way to which previous habits of intimacy gave a naturally familiar air. When judiciously managed, the play-off was usually effective ; but he was not always judicious, and happening once to sport an opinion which

excited surprise, a *friend* slyly asked, "What would Lord Dalreith say to this?" Harry's quick tact took the hint, and used its article of display more sparingly.

The world seldom teaches us to be great, but we learn in it the desire to seem so. I use the phrase "the world" in its ordinary and social signification, and the word *great* in the sense in which they who have abused the power bestowed on them by nature of really becoming so, least like to employ it. In other times Grey had purer notions of its meaning, and perhaps would still have said, if questioned, that moral greatness was a high faculty of the soul, whose essence was self-sacrifice, while he felt that (according to his present reading) *great* was the synonyme of power and station.

I shall say nothing of his successes, his humiliations, or his failures; but that the first were partial, the second numerous, and the last frequent. And thus he reached the month of April, the appointed time for the earl's arrival in Burlington Street.

Six months' absence had only served to confirm a passion which had at once inflamed his ambition,

overset his reason, and engrossed his heart. In the excess of his infatuation, he believed in love's scriptures as in holy writ; these scriptures were a look, a monosyllable, a rose-bud given playfully—no matter what. Love is at first a gentle creditor, and will take flowery coinage for the debt we owe him, however rapacious he may become afterwards. And then the charming candour that brightened in his idol's beautiful eyes, the *naïf* expressions that seemed to escape from her heart, and to which her blushes and childish confusion, when she would stifle or recall them, gave such sweet validity, could not be mistaken; and thus vanity working upon romance, and at the same time on a naturally right conception of what woman ought to be, persuaded him to the belief that encouragement such as he had received from Lady Emily, could not have been held out by a candid and delicate mind in any other feeling than that of sincerity.

It was true he had observed, and more than once, that when she seemed on the verge of betraying the secret of her own heart, she had adroitly turned aside the passionate avowal which trembled on his lips. But then the delicacy of her position, the dread of her father's displeasure,

—in short, a thousand things might have made her wish to retard an avowal to which she dared not reply, and yet must have in some shape noticed.

Wild and visionary as he was, still he could not always shut his eyes to the impediments which the want of birth and fortune threw in the way of his ambitious hopes,—audacious ones others might have called them ; but he was indulgent, and so sanguine, that when he earnestly desired any thing, the means of obtaining it constantly seemed to present itself, like the Fairy of the Ring, at a wish ; and Lady Emily's boundless influence over her father, added to the old lord's kindness towards himself, filled him with hope. Lord Dalrcith had so often praised Grey's talents, coincided in his political opinions, admired his knack of reasoning, his ready eloquence, and what he called statesman-like delivery, always winding up with " Mr. Grey, you should get into parliament," or " the house, Mr. Grey, the Commons, that must be your field of action ; you will cut a figure there," that Grey, naturally vain and credulous, could not but imagine that the earl had given the subject some serious thought.

Indeed, one less carried away by his fancies than

Grey was, might have been induced to believe the same; for there were moments when Lord Dalreith, in the affectionate expansion of a good-natured mind, used to say, "I should be a happy father, Mr. Grey, if my son gave the promise of future distinction which you appear to me to do. It has always been my wish that he should have followed in my steps, have become a steady political leader, or a distinguished diplomatist; but he will never be any thing but a man about town. While you, sir, or I am much mistaken, will in twenty years' time be cabinet minister, perhaps chancellor of the exchequer,—premier,—what you please; and then," he would add, with a pompous but encouraging smile, "we shall all make our bows at your levee."

At length, after an age of expectation, Grey ascertained that Lord Dalreith had arrived in town, and on the same day presented himself in Burlington Street, having first put on a coat which Lady Emily had once condescended to say was a particularly good blackish blue, adding that her next *Amazon*e should be of the same shade. From

that moment he had considered it as holy, and reserved it with religious care for the present momentous occasion.

And in this seemingly trivial matter, he felt that he had evinced the sincerity of his passion more than others sometimes do by apparently greater efforts. For since he had left Dalreith he had discarded colours and taken altogether to black, and was too sensible of looking in that picturesque garb like a young Venetian nobleman of Titian's time and pencil, to change it without extreme reluctance for a more garish colour. Indeed, a painter who lived (for the sake, he said, of having a skylight,) in the roof of the house which Grey inhabited, had requested to be favoured with a few sittings; and having turned black cloth into black velvet, thrown off the cravat, gloved one hand, ungloved the other, and decorated the little finger with an antique and massive ring, had made a capital thing of it: which, when exhibited at Somerset House as "a portrait after the manner of the Venetian school," had procured for the artist some reputation and a little practice, and made more than one pair of young eyes look hastily into their catalogues for 'No. 407 in the ante-room.'

However, sentiment conquered vanity, and the blackish blue already alluded to was put on. As a fitting accompaniment for this consecrated suit, the ashes of a rose—the last gift of the goddess,—which neither sealing-wax dropped on the end of the stalk, or silver paper closely folded round the flower, or any other process known to lovers, could preserve in its freshness, was placed within a delicate envelopement, and worn, but not visibly, in his bosom.

When he knocked at the door he felt oddly, timidly, and as he had never felt before; in short, as if he already anticipated the reception which country acquaintances sometimes meet with in town, an idea which, however, had not yet presented itself to his mind. How his heart beat, and still, notwithstanding its beatings, how he glanced at his figure in the pure mirrors that decorated the splendid suite of drawing-rooms through which he was ushered to the inviolate boudoir, the perfume-breathing boudoir, where Lady Emily herself reposed, surrounded by a rich variety of fashionable flowers, her saucy short-sighted friend turning over some drawings that lay upon a table before her, and the “observed of all observers,” the *divine*

Hyde Biddulph, as the ladies called him, leaning against the chimney-piece in the attitude of intellectual abstraction which he had recently invented, an attitude, or rather air, pronounced to be decidedly unattainable to the vulgar.

Lady Emily was evidently confused, but bowed gracefully, and without rising pointed to a chair.

“You are very good, Mr. Grey,” said her ladyship, “to recollect us after so many months’ absence. Have you been long in town?”

The calm politeness of her tone absolutely shocked Grey; and as she continued to speak, there was a marked condescension in her manner, and a constant effort to impress her more distinguished friends with the idea that he was entirely her father’s acquaintance, which his alert tact instantly seized. “Papa will regret not seeing you, Mr. Grey; he will, I am sure, feel obliged by your having called on him,” or other words to the same effect, were so often repeated, that Grey began to feel out of place, and was rising to terminate his painful visit, when Lord Dalreith entered the room, and greeting him warmly, expressed the pleasure he felt at seeing him again with a friendliness for which Grey’s heart thanked him more than

his words. He was in sad need of encouragement, and the earl's cordiality, though (as usual) somewhat touched with loftiness, was like balm to a fresh wound.

An invitation to dine the next day followed a string of awkward questions, such as Lord Dalreith had a knack of putting, and Grey no knack whatever at answering. Grey hesitated for a moment, then bowed acceptance; and yet he felt that he ought to have refused, but he wanted courage.

Besides a thought struck him; Lady Emily was perhaps acting a part, forced upon her by necessity, a part against which her heart repugned, yet dared not do so openly. No sooner had this idea presented itself, than he embraced it woingly, and resigning himself to the necromancy of hope, left Burlington Street in better humour with fortune than he had been a few minutes before.

How many pleas—and plausible ones too,—do we find for doing that which especially suits our fancies; reason may stand aloof, but *reasons* are always ready to chime in with our wishes. Grey had found out a dozen for dining in Burlington

Street, and was rehearsing them to his pride, just at the precise moment when Lady Emily was declaring her intention of expelling the servant, who had been so unpardonably *gauche* as to admit a country acquaintance into her sanctuary, and in the stupid notion that because it was a familiar face, it must necessarily be a welcome one. Poor man ! he knew little of the neutralizing effect of a London atmosphere, or how quickly, under its constant thaw, friendship weakens into acquaintance, or warmer love dilutes into indifference.

Half-past seven was the earl's nominal dinner-hour. Grey was punctual, and not a little mortified at finding himself—not only the first arrived, but that no member of the family was visible. He had probably never heard the story of Lord D——'s visitor.

A gentleman invited to dinner at Lord D——'s, arrived at eight o'clock, the appointed hour. No one visible: waited ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour; not a mouse stirring. At length he grew nervous, feared to have mistaken the day, and was on the point of sneaking off with the least possible *éclat*, when a footman popped in his head to see how the fire went on.

“Does Lord D—— expect company to-day?” he inquired anxiously.

“Yes, sir; we are to have a large party.”

“And what may be his lordship’s usual dinner-hour?”

“Why that’s rather uncertain, sir. We say eight on our cards, but seldom contrive to sit down before nine.”

Luckily Grey had not quite so long to wait. In a short time Lord Dalreith made his appearance, and soon after came Lady Emily, leaning on her inevitable friend, and followed by Colonel Bidulph and two or three exquisites of the very first water, full of that spirit of inconsiderate gaiety which the privileged sometimes abuse to cruel purposes, and disclosing in their careless conversation that the half hour before dinner—the mortal half hour—had been whiled away in the “dear boudoir,” so recently profaned by Grey’s unauthorized intrusion, as Lady Emily emphatically styled his ill-timed visit.

Her ladyship was in high spirits, beautiful, and (as it appeared to Grey for the first time) bold. Her manner towards him was precisely the same as the day before,—not absolutely impolite, but

positively chilling. At dinner the conversation turned wholly on topics of local, or individual interest, in which Grey, (of whose presence after the first moment of coldly-polite recognition she seemed wholly unconscious,) could take no part; and he was condemned to listen to Lord Dalreith's jeremiades over the failure of some favourite political scheme until the ladies withdrew.

Colonel Biddulph followed almost immediately, and soon after the rest of the party rejoined the trio in the drawing-room. Poor Grey! how his heart throbbed, how his pulses galloped, when he heard the sound of the piano, and the soft touch of the well-known hand caressing the notes, as though it would master them by playfulness. He sat down in a remote corner, and turned away his face from the instrument. After a rich prelude, Lady Emily touched a few notes of the air which she was going to sing; it was the barcarole in which their voices had so often made sweet music together at Dalreith.

Then came the past: the sea-shore, the lonely valley where the waters met, the autumn moonshine on the battlements, all were before him. But no beautiful eyes looked kindness; no soft voice

said, "Mr. Grey, shall we begin?" and yet it was still the same hand which brought forth the same delicious sounds—but not for him!

"But why does she choose that air?" he asked himself. "May it not be that she wishes to tell me, in the only language she dares to use, that her heart is still unchanged and lives in the past, though circumstances force her to assume the mask of gaiety?" And then he wished she had not worn it quite so naturally, that she had not been so good an actress; but her worldly education, her position in society, so unfavourable to the soul's expansion,—in short, the wonder was, not that she had faults, but that she was so near perfection. Besides, he well knew how dangerous it is to dissect the heart by which we are beloved; how weakly sensitive to hunt after failings, when we must work through affection to get at them. And thus he rocked himself, like a sea-bird on a billow, brooding delightedly: but it was only for a minute.

"Ah, that is my favourite," said the earl, approaching the piano with a good-natured smile, "which you and Mr. Grey used to sing together at Dalreith. Why not do so again? It will make

me think of my heaths and hills, and feudal seigneurie, where I set limits to the ocean—”

“For nothing else intrudes upon my power,” he would have added; but a scowl from Lady Emily, which a moment before her soft features seemed incapable of expressing, and a quick indignant flush, cut short the thread of his discourse and restored Grey to the melancholy privilege of reason, just as he had Jaffier'd himself into inwardly pronouncing that immortal line, so inestimable to unhappy lovers,

“Fathers have flinty hearts,
And children must be wretched !”

At length she sang, and he felt his flesh creep, and tears start into his eyes. Surely music may be called the memory of emotion; many things recall place, season, circumstance, but music re-strings the heart.

“Is it possible,” said he, mentally, as he gazed upon her, “that she who sits there so vain-gloriously beautiful, by whom my existence seems forgotten even while I am present, should a few short months ago have sung with me, listened while I read, and deigned to lean upon my arm

when we wandered together in the woods of Dalreith?" But his reverie was suddenly interrupted. Another voice mingled its fine tenor notes with the rich volume of Lady Emily's exquisite soprano : it was Colonel Biddulph, the most distinguished amateur talent of the day who had now taken the part which, in the golden hours of dupery, had so often been sustained by the then vain and happy Grey.

This was too much, and he would have instantly quitted the house, but the dead silence, the wide empty space which he must have traversed in crossing the saloon, alarmed his vanity, always his thin-skinned point, even when love was in the way ; and the idea of submitting himself as a subject for the wicked wit of others to batten on, would have been worse misery than even that inflicted by Lady Emily's contemptuous coldness.

It was a fortunate circumstance for Grey that his vanity was so severely piqued, for it weakened the pull on his heart ; and that so sensibly, that when Lady Emily, changing her tender barcarole for a bold bravura, cleared the divisions with theatrical dexterity, his pulse beat more freely, and he had courage to comment on her style, her expression, her elaborate graces—even her gaiety,

and to pronounce, but only to himself, the word—
exaggeration !

Her countenance, he found out, was totally changed, its expression was forced and artificial ; there was something, too, a little insipid in the perfect regularity of her features, which he was astonished never to have before discovered, and which seemed rather increased than lessened by a violent effort at splendid effect, unworthy (he thought) of so much natural beauty. In short, he had just decided that nothing was so cold, so unpoetical, so common-place as exaggeration ; and that the Lady Emily of Burlington Street, opposed to the Emily of Dalreith, was like a ball-room chandelier hung out in the pure beams of a summer moon ; when she suddenly turned towards him, though her eyes did not reach the obscure corner in which he had hidden himself, for they fell upon a flower that stood near to her in a tall glass, such as painters love to place a single lily in. It was a rare and delicate flower, and as she took it out of the water, carefully wiping the stalk with a handkerchief scarcely whiter than her taper fingers, she looked at it admiringly, pressed its leaves to her lips, and then holding it gracefully

at a little distance, followed it with her eyes, exclaiming, "Is it not beautiful?" in a voice of such tender sweetness, and with such a look of innocent, flower-loving sensibility, that if he had not rapidly convinced himself that it was all *got up*,—and for another,—he might have been lost for ever.

The party was soon augmented by the addition of two young ladies and an old one, enveloped in shawls and on the wing to some fashionable place of evening amusement, to which they insisted with gentle violence, that Lady Emily should accompany them. She, "nothing loath," prepared to do so, and her particular train followed her example.

Then came a charming scene of gay hurry and well-bred confusion; laughing, light raillery, sportive malice, and all the graceful persiflage of the drawing-room. Lady Emily was *rayonnante*,—too much so, Grey thought; her spirits seemed to have taken head, and run away with her delicacy, almost with her good-breeding, and he could not help falling again into comparisons, and contrasting the soft, expressive, poetical star of Dalreith, the gentle northern light, with the blaze that squandered itself so carelessly.

Not that he doubted its all being very fine, and very fashionable; and had the display been made expressly for himself, he would probably have admired it, as he did all things that were fine and fashionable. But feeling that he was completely lunched, scorned, and, worst of all,—forgotten, mortification and anger acted as clearers, and the decided tone and exuberant volatility disgusted him even more than the confident rattle of the bravura.

The gay group were soon equipped, and all had nearly left the room, when Grey heard Lady Emily exclaim, in a sort of half whisper to one of her worshippers, “Good gracious! we have quite forgotten that unfortunate Mr. Grey; must we ask him to meet us?”

“Par exemple,” cried the inevitable in a louder tone, “c’est un peu trop fort. Tell him that we all wish him good night.” A laugh followed, and then the quick descent of feet announced the departure of the brilliant coterie.

Grey remained for a moment stupified, then rose to quit for ever the scene of his humiliation, his bitter suffering; but the trials of the day were not yet over. From its commencement he had lost all confidence in himself, and consequently all power

of doing himself justice ; he felt this, and hastened to put an end to his horrible perplexities ; but as he approached the door, it opened, and Colonel Douglass, the old friend of Lord Dalreith, entered.

The colonel was a thoroughly good-hearted man, with a face like the characteristic names in our old comedies,—Feignwell, Marall, Lovemore, &c. which let you into the secret of his nature, without the painful or pleasurable exercise of curiosity. With Congreve or Farquhar he would have been Heart-free, and his excellent feelings were all in action in his countenance when he exclaimed, shaking our unfortunate hero heartily by the hand,

“ What—Harry Grey here ! Sincerely glad to see you, my dear fellow. It's some time now since we have met ; but I have not forgotten old days, when I used to take you to dine at the mess with me. Grown a dashing fellow, Harry, quite a kill-the-ladies ; but the same eyes—the same face ; should have known you any where, my boy.”

Grey bowed, and would have spoken, but no words presented themselves.

“ But you must come and see me, Harry,” continued the colonel, without noticing his confusion ; “ always to be found before two o'clock at Long's.

When I was quartered at Durham, your father did me a service which I should be a heartless fellow to forget.—But you are in haste, my boy; some wild scheme, I dare say. Well, off with you; but remember, to-morrow, any time before two,—or six o'clock at the British, if that suits you better.”

Grey bowed again, stammered out a few words of acknowledgment, and forgetting the ceremony of “good night” to Lord Dalrieth, who alone remained of the scattered party, rushed out of the room, leaving the colonel to disclose all the horrors of the drapery concern. Then hastily quitting the house and regaining his solitary chamber, he gave way to the agony of disappointed hope, and the sharper torture of humiliated vanity.

The night was horribly spent, but less in sorrow than in execration; all the powers of his mind were angered into violence, all concentrated in one great project of vengeance: but morning came, and with it calmer purposes, though every fibre still crisped as if beneath the lash. But neither night or morning brought with it the feeling of self-accusation; nor while he bitterly upbraided Lady Emily, did it ever occur to him that he had himself deserted one to whom he had been vowed, and slighted a

heart whose first affections he had won with all the lore of love, and with not fewer of its arts than that accomplished coquette herself had marshalled for his ruin.

About this time Grey's pecuniary resources were perceptibly narrowing. Absurd efforts to support a position to which he had no claim, and an affected taste for play into which he had plunged, not from liking, but because it brought him into occasional contact with certain young men of fashion, from whom he sometimes extracted a nod in Hyde Park, or an "Eh, Harry?" in Bond Street, had so diluted the strength of his purse, that both exertion and perseverance had become absolutely necessary to its re-establishment.

What a pity it is that a traveller along the high road of life cannot, when he sees its perplexities overtaking him, sit down by the way-side and let them go by. So thought Grey, but thought could bring no remedy against his thickening difficulties; so he was obliged to get upon his feet and oppose them. Necessity impels, ambition seduces, both together make a great man, or a great villain;

of him they made neither the one or the other, but a man who had learned from the *first*, to tame his spirit down to the furtherance of the *second*. He felt that he had talents, earnestly desired to make them convertible into fame and fortune, grew every day less scrupulous of the means, and yet dared nothing, saved by vanity more (it is to be feared) than by principle from daring any thing which might, by its failure, render him despicable. None could more thoroughly scorn the snares by which he had been entangled than he now did; but his ambition, more vulnerable than his judgment, still hankered after the society which had deceived, and then expelled him, and the whole force of his mind was turned upon the means of rising to an eminence, from which he might look down upon those who had made him feel the smart of inferiority.

On that entirely personal and individual feeling were all his plans based, but no sooner did he try to put one into execution, than he found it impracticable; so in a moment of sanity and disappointment he resolved to return to Durham, advise with his brother, and marry Fanny Middleton. Marry Fanny Middleton! Yes; Lady Emily's heartless coquetry had cured him,—not of aspiring dreams,

but of fine ladies. And then Fanny was a thousand times more beautiful ; the one (he now found out) had excited his vanity, bewitched his brain ; but the other ! ah, she alone had touched his heart ; he had never really loved but her, and she, he was sure, had not forgotten, and would forgive him.

“ Dear, dear Fanny ! ” he exclaimed with enthusiasm, “ how could I have ever ceased to think of you ? how could I have ever put *her* practised graces in comparison with your delicious simplicity, and the dear girlish charm of your beautifully mutable countenance ? and then she was again his lady-lily, his queen-bee, &c. In short, he had nearly arrived at Rosebrook before any thing but snow-drops, and dew-drops, and rose-buds, and honey-bells, and all such parts of the paraphernalia of nature as belong especially to “ those who trade in love,” had crossed his brain.

Once or twice the image of Lady Emily had swept before him like an oppressive shadow, but always with the word artifice, or effort, or affectation round it in luminous characters. No piping shepherd ever loved “ cotillions simples, souliers plats,” more than he did, or believed himself to do, at that moment. The sight of a country girl

striding over a hedge, with bare feet or uncoifed head, threw him into raptures; the free motion of her limbs, the broad uncramped foot and independent step, were all subjects of admiration; even the ragged tresses came in for their share of praise.

“Nature is always so beautiful,” said he. “Observe how the wind sustains her hair; how gracefully it floats.”

“I should like it better tightened up under a neat cap,” said a snug-looking little man, who occupied a corner of the coach in which Grey condescended to travel.

“I have no objection to the cap,” returned Grey, “provided it be really a neat one, like the quarter-caps of our grandmothers in their childish days, or the simple cambrick coif of the sober quaker. But the cap miscalled *French*, with the flaring bonnet over it, to which our village girls have lately taken, is my especial horror.”

“Ah,” rejoined the snug man, “that’s what I calls throwing out false lights. I’m no friend to a poor woman’s stealing a leaf out of a fine lady’s book; ’ten’t nat’ral—no, ’ten’t; and I am for nater

above the world, and truth, sir; nothing like seeming what you are."

"There I join you, sir," exclaimed Grey warmly; and immediately wrenching an occasion out of the poor man's words to throw off on his favourite theme, "You are right, sir, (he continued, imagining for a moment that he spoke before the House, a conceit which often seized him,) there is nothing like truth; no man should ever divest himself of the immense advantages derived from the great check of truth. Known veracity gives a weight, a genuineness, an enduring value to all that it utters, which far outlasts the impression made by the most brilliant talents, or the most profound knowledge. The sober reality of truth is like the calm of nature,—out of its stillness comes life, it strikes into the mind's core; while falsehood, like quicksilver dropped on a smooth surface, glides over it, glitters, disappears, and leaves no trace of its passage."

The man stared: he was a grocer of Sunderland, who had been to Lancaster after a bad debt, and not being able to trace the slightest connexion between Grey's illustration and his own view of the subject, turned round to a neighbour more in his

way, and fell into conversation about the rise of teas, and the qualities of potash. While Grey, satisfied that he loved truth because he had praised it, heard the cheers of *the House* tingling in his ears, and wrapping himself in the *douillette* of self-complacency, sunk back absorbed, and quite forgetful of the vain duplicity with which he had tacitly given in to the Howick and Stamford visions in which Lord Dalreith's credulity had indulged.

When Grey found himself within two or three miles of his Peri's bower, he quitted the stage and entered an inn, perhaps to compose his feelings, or his toilette,—or both. It was just an hour after day-break; the early breath of morning,—that balmy essence of compounded sweets, that suave, and fresh, and gentle odour, to which the breath of cattle, the moistened earth, and every flower and every herb that grows upon its bosom, contribute, and yet where nothing dominates,—seemed, as it blew upon him through the open casement, to bring with it the happy hours of his early youth, and to promise a renewal of them, or rather a renewal of those feelings which had enabled him to enjoy and

appreciate their simple charm. His heart seemed to purify, and the love of nature to enter once more into its long-deserted cell. He looked into the little garden and upon its gaily dappled flower-beds glistening with morning dew; and over the budding hedge upon the corn-field, where the bright and tender blade just showed its sweet spring green; and on the long, brook-watered meadow beyond, where cattle fed or ruminated with that sedate and gentle aspect which communicates a sentiment of serenity to the mind, while it presents to the eye a placid and pastoral image full of innocent and pleasant associations; and feeling that such simple appeals still found an answer in his breast, he fancied that nature had only been absent—not banished from it. But after some minutes her sweet and gracious beauty palled, and seemed insipid to him; and false views, false opinions, and artificial feelings got again the mastery.

In the same parlour where Grey thus mused, sat a person of homely appearance, who seeing him look broodingly, good-naturedly tried to provoke a conversation; to which purpose he volunteered informing Grey that he was going to B——, and

had just come from the neighbourhood of the Elms, which Grey immediately recollected to be the name of his brother William's farm. Without telling his name, he inquired about his family; he did so with a beating heart, feeling, and acutely, what he had till then forgotten,—that considerably more than a year had elapsed since he had heard of any of its members.

In fact, all correspondence had long ceased between Grey and his friends. In the early period of his stay in London he had written sometimes to his brother, and very often to Mrs. Middleton; but by degrees the intervals of silence had become longer, letters remained unanswered until they became unanswerable, or were acknowledged in a page of excuses and half-page of *newspaper news*; good-byes and remembrances every day growing colder and more laboured, with the name stretched out at full length, and the date both at beginning and end, to give the sheet a furnished look. And then came silence; and from the night at Astley's, unopened letters thrown into the fire with a hasty trembling hand, unnerved by conscience and mental irritation. But the dream was over, and Grey's lip quivered while he made the inquiry.

“Sir,” said the stranger, “no one can give you later intelligence of Mr. Grey than I can; and I am most happy to tell you, that there is not in the whole county of Durham a more respected or independent man. Every thing succeeds with him; his farm was a lucky hit,—ay, there he bought gold; and his wife! there’s a woman for you, nothing handsomer, I assure you, in all England; quite a beauty, and an amiable creature too, as any living.”

“As you seem interested, sir,” said an elderly person, who had been looking over a newspaper in the same room, “about Mr. Grey’s family, I feel great pleasure in adding my testimony to this gentleman’s. Mr. Grey is my near and much-respected neighbour; yesterday I had the pleasure of seeing him in his delightful home, his model farm as it may be truly called; where he enjoys as large a share of happiness as is perhaps compatible with the lot of human nature: fate indeed has smiled upon him. It would be difficult to find a more beautiful or excellent woman than his wife, or a happier man than her husband.”

“I was not aware that Mr. Grey was married,” said Harry, in the calmest tone he could assume. “Is it long since?”

“About six months, I should think.”

“And the lady's name?”

“Was Middleton, the daughter of the late Colonel Middleton, my old and valued friend. You will be delighted with her, I am sure,” added the gentleman, taking up his hat, “she is a charming creature; the best wife and the prettiest woman in the county.” And then with a polite bow he quitted the room, and a moment after passed the window reclined in the corner of a fashionable britschka.

“Bless me!” exclaimed the other stranger, “if it is not Sir Gower Horton of Hovendon Park, our county member. How distressing! will you believe, sir, that I never once thought of saluting him,—indeed, I may say, never caught the glance of him until this moment, his face being turned the other way, and I never thinking who it might be. Very awkward, sir, wasn't it?”

But Grey had no ear for his perplexities; his soul was convulsed. Fanny the wife of his brother! his brother the happy, the beloved husband of Fanny! All that he should have possessed in her, all that was now lost to him for ever, rushed upon his mind. I will not say that he envied

William's happiness; his nature was still too noble for that, but he could not witness it.

He went no farther,—and soon after was to be seen in the sequestered walks of Kensington Gardens, with his arms folded and his eyes cast on the ground, or darting behind the trees when a giggling group of fair exhibitors were seen approaching. He was paler, thinner, and more thoughtful than he had been, and the young ladies of the Kensington *establishments*, whose walks were wisely limited to the quiet alleys, knew him by the appellation of the “picturesque man.”

His repentance was real and profound, but it was only repentance; had it been remorse, he would have changed his course, which it appears he did not. It was what he had lost, not how he had lost it, which probably absorbed his mind.

Very successful people in life are often those who can be “bons ou mauvais à propos.” I do not know whether this was, or was not, Grey's secret. As he rose in fame, his high public qualities were talked of. What are called high public qualities,

are usually (at least often) brought into action—if not created, by individual ambition ; his certainly were so. The ambition of common minds is ascendancy of station ; of those some degrees higher, fame ; of the best and purest, the success of its object—that presupposed a noble one—by its instrumentality, but at the willing price of total personal sacrifice. No doubt there have been splendid exceptions ; but they are exceptions.—No more. How few love virtue as Napoleon said Dessaix did glory,—for its own sake !

Grey, I suspect, did not. Ambition (such as it was) was the main-spring of his actions, a jesuitical ambition ; whose frequent maxim was (I fear) that the end sanctifies the means. But I do not intend to follow him through the details of an eventful, and what is called eminently successful career ; but shall merely add, that at forty-three he was a high political leader and (*par parenthèse*) apostate, booked for a peerage, possessor of two country seats and a classical villa ; possessor, too, of a wife,—a Lady Mary, who never forgot the draper, nor the honour she had done him : and further blest with an arrogant daughter (mamma's counterpart) who despised him, and an unpromising

son, whose education had been entrusted to a tutor of her ladyship's selection, Sir Henry's public avocations not allowing him time to think about it himself.

I have not yet enumerated all his possessions,—but was the *roc's egg* amongst them? I fear not; for the *roc's egg* is—content.



COUNT DALBERG
AND HIS SON.



COUNT DALBERG AND HIS SON.

How is the gold become dim ! how is the most fine
gold changed !

Jeremiah.

Oh, father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear !

Passionate Pilgrim.

“ Is there no Dalberg here ? ” called out the emperor.

It is an old usage that, at the crowning of the kaiser, he who is the representative of that ancient house should be thus summoned.

There was a Dalberg there, and he answered boldly ; and there was another Dalberg, the son of that same lofty one who, while the herald blew a proud blast and a hundred imperial banners floated in the air, sat by the bed-side of a woman who was dying, and wiped the cold dew from her forehead, and held her hand within his, and prayed

aloud. The bells tolled ; he thought they were death-bells, but they rang out for joy that an emperor was crowned.

The accession of a new ruler always brings joy with it ; even those whose happiness it can no way influence rejoice. The streets swarmed, the crowd shouted, the women sang, the children laughed and danced, and rent the air with acclamations ; each seemed to think that change was benefit—sure and individual. The sound of revelry reached even to the suburb-street, to the still chamber where Herman sat by the death-bed of his mother : he closed the shutters, but the light of the bursting rockets glared in through the wide chinks. Old voices and young ones cried “ Long live the emperor ! ” He turned to the small mean bed on which she whom he most loved on earth lay dying, and as the dull light of an ill-fed lamp gleamed on her shrunken features, how coldly did that cry fall upon his heart. Long life ! ay, for others ; but for her of whom alone he thought, there was no more life, and the word was bitter to him.

That night she died, and the son sat beside the corpse of his mother. At midnight there was music in the street, but he did not hear it ; some-

times he heard the dull ticking of the clock that stood near to the bed—but nothing else.

Margaret, the mother of Herman, had been beautiful as the stars in heaven; and as she lay dead, her features seemed to recover their pure and graceful form, and her brow its early sweetness. It was daybreak, and the streets were silent: Herman opened the casement; the grey dawn lighted imperfectly the melancholy chamber. The son looked upon his mother; he had heard that death was hideous, but how beautiful she was!—like a fair marble image wrought by an inspired hand; and on her lips there was a smile, as if she listened to the whisperings of angels.

There were moments when he could not think her dead; moments when he fancied, as he looked upon her intently, that she moved; but as the sky brightened, and broad daylight poured into the chamber, death became more awfully visible. It was six o'clock, and some early shops were already open: he closed the curtain of the window, and locking the door carefully, descended the stairs. At the entrance of the house sat a woman who sold flowers; she was arranging her nosegays, and as he approached said kindly, "I have kept these

roses for your mother ; their pleasant scent will do her good." He took them and said, "I thank you," not knowing what he did ; and returning to the chamber, broke off the leaves and strewed them over the corpse. Then again descended the staircase, and went out upon his melancholy mission.

His humble orders were soon executed, and not till then did he believe his mother actually dead ; not till he saw the lid of that simple coffin, which was all that his poor fortune could afford her dear remains, closed upon them ; or imagine that she had gone from him entirely, until the earth——But it is sad to talk of it ! We are accustomed to think of death as a refuge from trouble, a translation to a happier home ; but the loved one, the dear, the familiar—down in the earth, with a heavy clod upon the heart but a little while before so full of human sympathies : and the cold wind, and the heavy rain, and the long nettles growing out of the grave,—the distant, dark, oblivious grave !

Herman was fifteen, and Margaret—the mother whom he had lost—only sixteen years older. She was little more than a beautiful child when a count

of the house of Dalberg, hunting in a remote forest, saw her at the door of her father's dwelling, scattering bread to the deer that were gathered tamely round her, in cap and gloves of velvet lined with fur, and a rough pelisse of forest green, clasped at the throat by some gorgeous ornament, which had once made part of the gallant accoutrements of the Old Major, as her father, Herman Werner, was usually called.

The old major had been a fierce student, a stormy patriot, a brave soldier. He had married a charming girl twenty years younger than himself, whose elder sister he had loved with a truer and a tenderer passion than, from his somewhat severe though handsome countenance, many would have supposed him capable of feeling. But she had chosen another, was unfortunate, fell ill, and as she lay upon her death-bed, forsaken by him for whom she had forsaken all, sent for the faithful Herman, and bequeathing her little sister—who was an orphan—to his care, died comforted.

Angels might have looked with delight on the way in which Herman fulfilled the trust reposed in him. When his charge approached womanhood, he said to her, “Margaret, we may soon have

war, and I may be called away from you. You have no friend; therefore I would fain find you one, who would be a firm support to you in sorrow,—for it must come to us all,—and a dear companion in joy.”

Margaret blushed, and cast down her bright eyes; the major paused,—he was not a man of many words, but he was one of profound feeling; his voice faltered.

“I would propose to you, Margaret——In short, what think you of Albert Hartzman, the son of my old comrade? He is young, and brave, and comely—”

“O, not comely!” cried Margaret abruptly; “I think him frightful.”

“Frightful!” exclaimed the major, in a surprised but not an angry tone; “why there is not a girl in the canton that does not set her cap at him.”

“That may be,” answered Margaret scornfully; “but I, for one, should rather live by myself amongst the wolves in the old forest yonder, than marry Albert Hartzman, if that is what you mean.”

The major smiled, and said, “Well, if you will

not have Albert, we will say no more about it ; but there is Leopold, our neighbour the late governor's son, who has loved you from your childhood ; an excellent youth,—gay, rich, and the best shot in the country."

"Not so good as you are, cousin ; besides," she added with a childish air, "I can't bear him ; he has five fingers on one hand, and only three on the other." The major smiled again.

When Margaret had been placed in his arms by her dying sister, she was only five years old, and he was twenty years her senior ; so he taught her to call him uncle, thinking it well that some show of affinity should exist between them. But as she grew up, he took an aversion to the assumed title, and changed it to that of cousin, which he discovered to be a pleasanter sounding word.

"But, my dear cousin," said he, "you must hear reason. It is more than probable that I may be obliged to quit you. The good Teresa, who has been as a mother to you, is likely to be also called away to superintend the concerns of her son, now a widower. To remain in this solitude would neither befit your youth or character ; the chances of war may keep us separated for years—"

“Not unless you please it, cousin,” interrupted Margaret anxiously; “for if you will, you may take me with you; and a thousand times happier shall I be sharing your dangers, than in the governor’s castle with Leopold, or Albert either. Take me with you, (she added,) my only friend! With you I shall be safe and happy; but (and her quick tone changed to a mournful one) if I must stay behind, let it be here in your dwelling.”

The major was deeply affected. He had long loved Margaret with more than a cousin’s love, but he had never dared to reckon on any return of affection other than that which a child feels towards a parent. He might have married her, and the world would have said, “The good major! how nobly he has acted. He has made the girl his wife, with whom in pure benevolence he saddled himself when she was an infant.” But he viewed the matter in another light, and struggling against his deeply attached heart, argued thus with himself:—“Ought I to take advantage of the influence which habit (he would not even to his own ear say kindness) has given me over her mind, to engage her in a union with a man old enough to be her father, and to whom she may merely fancy

herself attached because she is accustomed to his society, and knows nothing of the world? If, having become acquainted with it, and with other suitors younger, more brilliant, and more engaging, her heart still continues faithful to its first preference, then, and then only, may I honourably make her my wife; but there must be no regrets, no crying out of the cheated heart, no backward wishes.”

Thus thought the good major, and as he thought, so did he act. War, as he expected, broke out, his services were offered and accepted; but before joining his regiment he deposited the sorrowing Margaret with an excellent woman and dear friend, whose position obliged her to mix much in high, but select society; and consigning the fair girl to her discreet care, departed.

He was away two years, and when he returned with a sabre wound across the forehead, Margaret sprang to meet him with a bright glow of happy feeling in her charming eyes, and a frank hope on her lips that he would take her back to her forest, and to the deer, and the pheasants, and the flowers that she had loved and nursed in her infancy. She returned to her sylvan haunts a

happy wife ; and Margaret, the sole offspring of this true marriage of affection, grew up amidst the woods as her mother had done before her.

When Margaret was fourteen, Herman Werner was beginning to be called the Old Major, though sound health and a cheerful temper had combined together to keep his fine countenance and manly figure much as they were when his charming ward had flouted the pretensions of Albert Hartzman and the governor's son. The young Margaret was wild, and shy, and beautiful, as her mother had been ; could run with the deer, steer a sledge down the steep face of the mountain when the snow covered it, and row her father's skiff across the forest-lake with a light oar and a steady movement, and then warble to him as he cast his line into its bosom ; while the rocks, giving back the sound, seemed as if they had an aviary of sweet-singing birds hidden within them. The air was not fresher, the flowers sweeter, the sky brighter than she was. While summer lasted, she rowed upon the lake, rambled in the forest, cultivated her flower-garden, and gathered fruits which she helped her mother to preserve for winter luxury ; and when the long evenings came, spun and knit, thrummed on an old

harpsichord the mountain airs which her father loved, or sat at his feet and recounted to him the legends she had gathered from the shepherds, when they came down from the hills to their winter dwellings.

It was thus that she lived when the young Count Dalberg, hunting (as I have said) in the forest, saw her in the midst of the dappled herd, giving bread to her favourites. He was alone, having left his attendants far behind; she did not hear him approach, and he had leisure to gaze long and uninterruptedly on her, before a voice, calling from within the house, caused her to quit her gentle occupation.

It was almost supper-time; a bright wood-fire burned in the old hall, where the major and his happy family were used to pass their winter evenings. Madame Werner—still lovely, though her beauty had taken a more maternal character, sat at the antique harpsichord, giving expression to the quaint measure of an old-fashioned air, which was one of her husband's particular favourites, her fine eyes fixed on Margaret, who stood in the

middle of the room in the full blaze of the gay fire, and close to her the major, holding her hand which he raised towards his head, while he turned her round and round, following the graceful movement of a dance which he had learned in his youth in some island of the Mediterranean.

Werner was one of those happy spirits who, though already in the downhill path of life, enjoy the recreations of the young as if they were still themselves of that gay band. His habitual gravity made his mirthful vein appear more rich and heartfelt; and though less the customary produce of his mind than a delightful variety, yet the veriest child in Christendom could not share in the sport, promote the game, or insist on the forfeit, with more hearty earnestness than he did.

He was now in one of his most joyous moments, entering with the gaiety of fifteen into the spirit of the sport; whirling Margaret round rapidly, chasing her as in anger, or catching her in his arms and throwing her upwards with a spring, as if she had been no heavier than a feather. A little apart was a boy sitting on a stool, and blowing violently through a pasteboard trumpet; with one foot he marked the time of the dance, while the

other was slyly advanced to entrap the heedless dancers. It was a child of the neighbourhood, who from his good humour and intelligence had become a favourite at the Kloster, the name which Werner's dwelling, having been part of an ancient religious house, still retained. More in the background were two women, one old, the other young, both gravely and neatly dressed, as became the confidential domestics of a retired and respectable country family: one working at a frame, and the other sitting on a low chair beside her, dividing a mass of different-coloured worsteds into separate skeins. This simple fashion, which recalled the times of the patriarchs, took nothing from the respect due on one side, and heightened considerate feelings into friendly ones on the other.

Margaret, flushed and breathless, was—as I have already said, standing up in the middle of the room, and the major beside her marshalling her movements, when a knock was heard at the entrance gate. “It is Gottfried,” said the major; and gave Margaret a spin round after what he called the Venetian fashion. The younger female gathered up her worsteds, and went to open the door. There was a short pause; and then the girl

returned, lighting in a benighted wanderer, who she well knew would be welcome to her master's hospitable home.

Werner advanced with a kind greeting; while his wife rose from her harpsichord to receive her unknown guest, with the natural grace which distinguished all her movements. The women left their frame and retired silently, and Margaret, who felt a little ashamed of her ruffled hair, and frock torn from its gathers, shrunk back abashed. But a few minutes brought all things again into their usual course, and the young Count Dalberg was soon installed in the seat of honour, close to the blazing hearth, while brisk preparations were making in a more remote corner of the hall for the cheerful evening meal, which was speedily served with the customary neatness and comfort,—the unexpected presence of a stranger causing neither delay or confusion in the major's well-regulated household.

Count Dalberg wast just twenty-five, of a charming figure and most amusing conversation; with the ease of high breeding and the frankness of one who had never found it necessary to accommodate his tastes to the caprices of others, but

mixed with a natural desire to please, which, converting boldness into candour, is always sure to inspire confidence and good-will. His politeness was not the conventional courtesy of the drawing-room, but the softer one of the heart; technical from habit, but cordial from good feeling.

Werner took to him at once, and in truth it was but natural that he should do so, for Dalberg's look and speech would have won over the most crabbed. He had travelled much, read much, and seen much of the world; was familiar with the manners and habits of rural life, and spoke of woods and mountains as if he had borrowed the language of the birds who dwelt in them. Werner who loved to listen when he could be either entertained or instructed, led him to talk of the countries which he had visited; he did so, and without affectation, but with eloquence and fervour; while Margaret, who dearly loved all kinds of tales, not even disdaining those of the fairies, did, like the gentle Desdemona, "seriously incline," noting with most delighted ear the marvels which the narrative of the traveller unfolded.

Sometimes the scene was an island in the Atlantic, an ocean paradise, with its smooth

savannahs, its almond blossoms, tall pines and feathery cedars, and its flowery carpet of home and foreign sweets ; and on its highest peak a hermitage, perhaps a convent, whose bells sent their sweet and holy sound at morning and evening over the wide waters, bearing the thought of prayer and Providence to the watching mariner. Or it was the great chain of the mighty Andes, hiding in its bosom the city of the Incas,* and the boiling wells in which their golden throne lies buried. Then the scene changed, and the traveller told how he had sailed along the shores where Greece lay sleeping on her chains, had anchored in the bays of classic Sicily, passed the fair and lonely coast of Calabria,—that rich hive of almost unappropriated sweets, of beauty sown by nature but not reaped by man,—and seen the sun rise and set on glittering Naples, and proud Genoa that vies with the great city of the Bosphorus.

All this, and much beside of place and people, did he touch upon ; lingering, as he saw Margaret's curiosity sharpen into anxiousness, on the Spanish ladies who dwell in the old cities of the caliphs, and sing the ancient ballads of the Moorish times

* Caxamarca.

in the lemon-groves of Seville or of Cordova; or the bright girls of fruitful Sicily,—fair as the Proserpine of their pagan story,—who have not forgotten the song of the Syrens; and then he told of the music, and the moonshine, and the gay revolvings, the prompt yet bashful movements of those antique dances—children of the southern shores—which have outlived tradition, until Margaret began to think less kindly of her forests and her snow-mountains than she had ever done before. As night came on, the traveller's stories became like those of Schehezerade, more intensely interesting, and it was past midnight before sleep was thought of.

A day's sporting in the woods, proposed by Werner, and warmly acceded to by Dalberg, brought on another evening of pleasant intercourse; but it was now Dalberg's turn to listen, and he did not acquit himself less well in his new capacity, than he had previously done in the more brilliant one of narrator.

Make me a good listener, would be no bad prayer for one who was obliged to be the shaper of his own fortune; that one talent, or rather passive faculty, has often eclipsed others of eminent

brightness, and opened doors closed against infinitely higher claims. It is certain that the good major, though neither vain or exacting, was pleased and flattered by Dalberg's attentive mien. He too had travelled, and though his imagination might have somewhat rusted in camps, his heart was as green as ever, and its freshness gave a fine youthful zest to his conversation, which had besides all the interest that truth, judgment, right feeling, and an observant mind could bestow upon it. And thus discoursing most excellent music, they became friends.

The next day, Dalberg (unwilling longer to intrude on Werner's hospitality) quitted the Kloster, but not its neighbourhood. The lake, the mountains, the forest, seemed like the rock in the story of the Calendar, which, by some mysterious influence, drew every thing towards it. But he best loved the lake, for Margaret's window looked upon it; and while he cast his line into its waters, his eyes watched her shadow, as it passed behind the slight trellis which, when spring had covered it with leaves and flowers, screened the interior of her chamber.

When he went out with his gun, its echo was

sure to be heard in that part of the forest which approached nearest to the Kloster. He had found a lodging at the curate's; and as Rosengarten was but a mile farther down in the valley, he could see the walls of the old building rising from an aerial swell, with the small clear lake at its feet, and the arched fragments of its cloisters stretching back into the girdling woods and discoursing silently of the long gone-by with the fresh grass and the green leaves of the forest, as time does with youth,—youth that still flings away its blossoms, speeding lavishly to the end without heeding the lesson, yet dies before its tutor who seemed so old, but who lives on to throw away the same unregarded counsels on the fresh shoots of other seasons.

Before half the spring had passed away, Dalberg had discovered that life without Margaret would be too vapid for endurance. He was what lovers call of mature age, and exempted by the death of both his parents from the check of dutiful allegiance. Nor was Margaret's alliance to be scorned even by the highest blood, for hers was pure and noble. Her mother's house, though fallen, was ancient, and honourably historical; and her father was the son of one who had written

his name proudly, but who for a political offence, an act motived by conscience and not unappreciated by the world, had been forbidden the court, and deprived of certain hereditary honours and advantages.

It could not be said that Werner put his claims too much in the sun; on the contrary, he had almost forgotten them. His pride was to possess the affections of the simple people amongst whom he lived, and who looked up to him with reverence; and though he might have presented himself fearlessly before his sovereign, and have claimed by virtue of his military services the restoration of such ancestral honours as had been forfeited by his father's imprudence, yet he preferred before all things the quiet of his happy home, and the fair company of nature.

The starry path of love seems but a dull road to those who have left it behind them for ever. It makes no narrative, awakens no new images, and sometimes perhaps vexes the mind with old ones. We have pulled the flowers which once grew in it ourselves, when the young life was in them; and

when those which have been gathered by others are presented to us, we find them like the Arabian apple, all dust and ashes. There is no going along such tracks on other people's feet, we must be there present and eminent; then the spring daisies swear they are immortals, and the ragged thorn passes off its hips and haws for downright rosebuds—but at second hand!

It is for this reason that I shall pass over Margaret's wooing days. At length came her wedding one, with the volume of fate in it!—but it was beautiful. The sun looked out in its loveliness, the air was full of fragrance, the woods of song. "Happy is the bride that the sun shineth on," said the major, and the mother's loving heart was cheered by the cheerfulness of nature.

Margaret knelt in the presence of Heaven, and behind her knelt her parents, giving the holiest sanction to the solemn act which it could receive from earthly approbation. For the king's son, or the king himself, may give away the bride, the queen may fasten pearls on her neck, and kiss her on the forehead, and strangers may shed tears at seeing it; but the father's blessing and the mother's kiss are the holy ones, after the blessing of

God, which theirs invoke, and without which all others are valueless.

A fairer pair had rarely knelt before the nuptial altar than Dalberg and Margaret Werner. The curate of Rosengarten blest their union, and prayed in heart and voice for the child, (for so he still called her,) whom he had loved from her infancy, and for him who was to be the future guardian of her happiness.

This curate of Rosengarten — simple, pure-minded, and zealous as an apostle, fervent and fearless at the altar, mild and benignant in the relations of life,—had still one shade of weakness in his character, which neither his holy function, or his solemn sense of the duties it imposed, could entirely keep down. He was a poet,—or rather a stringer of rhymes; and though he often took himself to task for an idle use of time, if not an evil one, yet the sin of rhyming was upon him, and never could he resist an opportunity of indulging in it. The wedding eve offered one too tempting to be resisted; and as he took a solemn and touching leave of Margaret in her maiden

character, giving her much wholesome counsel and many blessings, he could not help slipping a paper into her hand, to which he had consigned these well-meaning verses :—

The other day, my beauteous one, thou wert a gentle child,
 A guileless, careless, red-cheeked thing, and as the reindeer
 wild ;
 And now thou art a lady bright,
 A star of peril to the sight.

I knew thee in thy snowy frock, and sash of azure blue,
 And locks that on thy shoulders hung in curls of sunny hue ;
 I knew thee when thy infant face
 Peep'd from its baby cap of lace.

And now thou soon wilt married be to a gallant cavalier,
 And cloth of gold and gems thou'lt have, such as noble ladies
 wear ;
 And thou wilt go to court—and there
 Nothing will be that's half so fair.

But will thy heart be light as 'twas, when thou didst gather
 flowers
 From the honey-scented eglantine to build up fairy bowers ;
 Or, older grown, thy playful grace,
 Brought smiles into a parent's face ?

God grant it may ! for thou didst make a paradise of home,
 Content within its quiet sphere in solitude to bloom ;
 While others, fair as thou, had pined
 Within such lists to be confined.

And surely joy will spring for one who has so wisely sown,
 Thy happy home will be to thee a palace and a throne ;
 And all the good thou didst bestow
 On others, back to thee will flow.

Margaret was affected by the curate's kindness, if not by his poetry; some tender thoughts swelled in her heart which she would have repressed, but they refused to be commanded. Without knowing why, these simple lines had saddened her, and she found herself repeating "thy happy home," when she would have wished to have forgotten them altogether.

A marriage solemnized in the quiet of the country, to which the woods, the mountains, the simple and pious people bear witness, touches the heart more nearly than the same ceremony performed with all the pomp and bustle of a town pageant. The file of equipages, the crowd of starers, the display of dress, the consciousness of beauty, hustle out the serious and collected feelings naturally inspired by a ceremony so full of the future.

Margaret's vows were plighted in the solemn shade of her native forest, in the small church that nestled in its bosom, with sylvan images, sacred in themselves as being of Almighty workmanship, and mixed with others made sacred also by their appropriation, around her. Her maiden beauty became the flowers which were its only ornament, and the white veil, thrown over her by her mother's

trembling hands, accorded well with the vestal sweetness of her innocent countenance.

How deep and holy are the secrets of a parent's heart on the day when it makes over its dear rights to another! Hope—with the spirit of prayer upon it—joy, sorrow; wishes accomplished, fears awakened, all are there, with the perspective of separation, dimmed with clouds, in the distance.

But at length it was all over. Margaret was at Vienna, and the major, with the other dear Margaret, were left alone in the forest.

—II.—

A year passed away; and at the end of it, Margaret—now a mother—returned with her husband and her child to visit her parents, who never quitted their solitude. Sweet gentle creature! how she loved the forests, and the lake, and the mountains of her childhood! and how cold and heartless appeared to her the conventional politeness and itemed smiles of the gay courtiers, and the hollow pomp of their court! It was fine, but her heart took no pleasure in its finery; it did not lean upon it for happiness, as on its old and dear associations.

And yet she had been supremely happy there, happy in the exclusive possession of her husband's heart, happy even in the pride which he took in her; though sometimes unquiet when she saw it fed more by the fuel of others' admiration, than by the sweet aliment of individual love. For the thought would often cross her modest mind, that her attractions were too feeble to justify the sensation which her appearance was sure to create, and that to the charm of novelty alone was she indebted for it. "Ah," she would say fearfully, "when the painted glass is withdrawn, and the object appears in its natural light, how will his heart bear the disappointment!"

But it was not when she returned to the Kloster that Margaret felt the visitation of doubt. No; there her heart admitted nothing but joy. The caresses of her parents, the sight of old familiar things, the presence of her husband, of her child, whom she carried for ever in her arms, and the absence of what is called *the world*, brought paradise around her. Every day, at the hour when Dalberg was used to return from the chase, she would sit down at the root of an old thorn that grew in his path, and watch for his coming, fond-

ling her little Herman as he lay on her knee, looking up and smiling idly at the blue sky ; or, with head erect and busy feet, trying to grasp the flowers which she held playfully before him. At such moments her mind was full of gentle musings ; and while she caressed her child under the same trees that had lent their shade to her own infant sports, it seemed as if she lived between memory and hope.

“And yet the world has its charms, its delights,” said Dalberg one day when, without thinking of poetry, Margaret had grown poetical while she talked of the sweet-stirring air and the pleasant site of the old Kloster, looking out from its green forest and casting the reflection of its turrets into the lake, in whose clear mirror the broad blue sky looked like a glorious pavement bordered with all fantastic things that, branching downwards, seemed to grow into its pure bosom.

“But not such as we have here,” said Margaret, with a look of love.

“Not such,” he replied, “but others,—perhaps more in unison with the wants and wishes of man.” Margaret was silent. “In the sameness of nature—” She looked wonderingly. It had always

seemed to her, that in the full page of nature's divine book all things were to be found, all beauty, and all knowledge.

“In the sameness of nature,” continued Dalberg, “the mind feels the want of that excitement by which its faculties are developed, and those before unfelt powers which have lain bedded in inaction, called into life. We awake here amidst the same scenes that day after day have presented themselves to our eyes; they are beautiful, but we no longer mark their beauty; we assemble together, the same faces always surround us; if the sun shines, we bask listlessly in its beams, or pursue the same sports which we pursued yesterday, and all the yesterdays that went before it. If the sky lowers, we are driven to pore over dull books,—poor substitutes for the quick coinage of speech; to associate with the dead, while others plunge into the full stream of life and are carried forward by the rapidity of its current; to retrace frivolous events with prosing neighbours,—events gone by in the world, or never known to it,—as if the fate of empires hung upon them; while the mind stands still, waiting the touch of circumstance, or congenial feeling.—It is the life of a

cabbage-stump. But in society, the mind recovers its brightness; its veins and arteries re-appear upon the surface, which becomes again lucid by friction, and spread out the currents of thought that lay congealed in their channels.—But you, my love, think otherwise.”

“ Ah, Dalberg,” said Margaret, in a tone of reproach, “ how eloquent is your displeasure! If the recollection of our first meeting, our early love, has endeared these woods to me; if my heart warms to this spot because it is the home of those I dearly love, and was that of my happy childhood, do not for that reason doubt that all places, all scenes, all occupations are not welcome when you are with me. If I have loved my home too well, and the world too little, it is because the one separates me too often from you, who are all to me,—life, air, sunshine; while the other, claiming nothing from time, allows me the dear joy of being always near you. But, (she added, in the soft tone of one who almost feared to have said too much,) I know well that the duties of man and woman are different: my bounden one is to make you happy, and in doing so I myself am blest. But yours are high and complicated; your station,

your public character make it necessary that you should live in the world. Be it so, crowds and deserts are the same to me, so that I be but your companion, and your dearest one."

"Sweet Margaret," said Dalberg with tenderness, "can you doubt it? Is it for one like you to dread a rival?"

"I know not what I dread," she replied; "certainly nothing defined. Yet there are moments when heavy thoughts steal over me, and then my woods become dearer to me than ever, and I feel as if all good and holy things dwelt within them. But you smile, my love; be it in kindness, and I will smile with you, for I feel that I have been childishly, perhaps waywardly, urgent. Will you forgive me?"

"Forgive! How can I forgive one who has never offended? In you, my beloved creature, there is nothing to pardon, every thing to approve. Ah, Margaret! your beautiful devotedness shames my worldly feelings. But here comes your father, tugging on Herman in the new cart which Wilfred made for him last week."

"Dear boy!" exclaimed Margaret, with a mother's joy sparkling in her eyes; "how beau

tiful he looks. See, they put my father's hat on him." Then flying off with the wild gaiety of a child, was in the midst of the group the next moment.

Dalberg paused an instant to look upon them. "What a beautiful picture!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps Margaret is right; perhaps the world has nothing better than this to offer."

Time passed, and Margaret was still the happy and beloved wife of Dalberg; twice every year she visited her home in the forest, and gladdened with her presence the heart of the good major and her tender mother. At ten years old, Herman could follow Werner when he went up to shoot in the mountains, proud to be the occasional bearer of the bag, and loving the clambering, the excitement, the wild and, for so young a sportsman, perilous paths,—every thing, in short, except the death of the bird, or the sight of the wounded one, as keenly as the major himself. But his heart was tender, and the fluttering wing, or the stained plumage, was never beheld without a choky feel in the throat, which Werner remarked with pleasure;

for (as he would often say) we are made of hardening stuff, and if the young heart is not pitying, there will be no mercy in the old one.

Herman was a handsome, hardy boy, serious and gay by turns, but oftener grave than giddy, with a fine thoughtful eye and a woman's smile, tender and beautiful. Even at his early age, much of the same contempt of pomp and love of excellence for which Werner was remarkable, distinguished his character. His perception of right and wrong was quick and delicate, his judgment precocious, his sensibility profound—not showy ; it made no sign, but the fire worked under ground, not yet concentrated by time or circumstance, but with all the materiel of future action within it.

—III.—

It was about the time when Herman was twelve years old, and Margaret twenty-eight, that the latter became acquainted with a lady who had begun to excite an interest in the court circle. She was the widow of a Sicilian nobleman, and not altogether unknown at Vienna, for two or three

persons of the court remembered to have seen and slightly known her at Palermo in the life-time of her husband. But who she had been, or what were the circumstances of her previous life, none knew.

She was still young and, as some thought, interesting, with strange bright eyes that had more of animal wildness in them than of woman's gentleness. They were dark and far apart, and sometimes spoke an odd language, whose mystery was not without interest. Her black hair hung about her eyes in heavy ringlets, and she used to put it back with her hand as if it mattered not how it was, uncovering a forehead fairer than the rest of her face, which was sallow and of a thin oval form, singularly but not unpleasingly filled up.

It was a figure and a being full of contrasts: her step was languid, her manner abrupt, her voice soft, her eye bold and rapid. When she was spoken of, there was no medium in opinion: those who did not think her handsome, fell into the other extreme and called her disagreeable; others were spell-bound, and discovered a grace, hitherto unseen, in the awkwardness of her movements.

Her dress was apparently negligent, yet studied; fanciful, out of the mode, ridiculous perhaps,—or would have been so if worn by another; but it seemed to become the character of her figure, which would have but ill allied itself with the systematic caprices of fashion, and at best have been that of a Parisianized Medea, had the milliners meddled with it.

When she entered a room, her foreign expression, singular attire, and an original air by which she was especially individualized, seldom failed to create a general sensation. People gazed at her as on some wild thing just taken in a toil, exclaimed against her strange eyes and undrilled gait, and often ended by finding charm in the one and dignity in the other.

If she wore an ornament, it was sure to be some uncouth and massive thing, that looked as if it had been modelled by rude fingers and chiselled by unfinished tools, such as might have been found in the niche of an Egyptian deity, or amongst the ruins of a Mexican temple. Her hair was perfectly black, and she used to bind it partly up with leaves or wild berries, or with the flowers of the asphalathus, leaving the rest to float freely on

her shoulders; affecting at one time the frantic dress of the bacchante, or entering a quiet circle in the glittering vest and Egyptian headcloth of a wandering Bohemian. Yet when astonished eyes were turned upon her, her look was shy and startled, as if she would have hidden herself from the scrutiny which her dress seemed purposely adopted to provoke.

She never danced; but as she moved, her path was marked by the fragrance of the rare and delicate flowers which she always wore in her bosom. It could not be said that she was masculine, and yet there was nothing of woman, in her sweetest and most becoming character, about her. It was impossible to associate her image with that of any thing domestic or habitual, or fancy her submitted to the rules of common life; from her isolated air, none could have supposed that she had been a wife; she looked like something alone in the world, something unlinked and solitary, a wild and uncommuning spirit, which had made a track for itself apart from the beaten one, and had never known home ties, or human sympathies. And yet fine and generous things were reported of her, great personal sacrifices were recorded, and a beau-

tiful giving up of worldly interests, for a husband by whom she had been abandoned.

At times, she appeared natural even to rudeness; at others, the perplexed thread of an artificial nature was visible. Yet she could not be called studied; there was an absence of project about her, which seemed to be less the result of singleness of mind than of long habits of loneliness. She never appeared to know precisely what she did or said, rarely where she was, or to whom she addressed herself; consequently, she often uttered strange and misapplied things. Still her habits were not those of a candid nature, but of one careless of the feelings of others rather than communicative of her own; yet not careless from malice, but indifference. These fits of coldness, abstraction, and uncourteousness were so frequent, that a warm or kindly expression from her lips became infatuating; it had an appearance of sincerity that seemed like an escaping of the heart. Many believed her altogether artificial; while others deemed her one who nursed some secret and absorbing sorrow, which at times affected her mind so powerfully as almost to unsettle it.

Of this belief was Margaret; and pity, which

in her charming nature awakened all kindly feelings, induced her to seek the society of the Countess Isabella. Dalberg thought otherwise. Her appearance was so unpleasing to him, that he gave her credit for every species of deception; and when he did speak of her, which was rarely, and only when the theme was forced upon him, it was to mock at what he called her calculated insanity.

Margaret was her idol. Though nearly of an age, sorrow—or some other cause—had already tarnished the lustre of Isabella's charms; while Margaret's soft and more distinguished beauty still retained its first young freshness. They were like day and night; one bright and pure, the other dark and troubled, but with a wild gleam breaking sometimes through the heavy clouds which, like the forked lightning, threw a pallid glare on all around it. Her love of Margaret was like that of an Indian woman for her first-born,—she fawned upon her, chided her lovingly, caressed her, twined flowers in her hair, and then laughed to see her look so beautiful.

The coldness with which she spoke of Dalberg, not only on their first acquaintance, but even long

after she had become familiar in his home, offended Margaret, who was jealous of herself when she found that she was preferred to him. But Isabella's feelings, always in extremes, suddenly took another turn, and one more suspicious than Margaret might have been startled by the energy of her praise.

“O,” she would say, “what happiness is yours ! How noble he is, how tender ! How magnificent to the eye, and to the heart ! O, how persuasive ! Beautiful wedded love ! how bright it seems, my Margaret, in your example ; mine was a frightful experience,—but yours !” And then she would burst into tears, and hide herself in some solitary corner.

Dalberg was the last to perceive the impression he had made upon her, but at length it thrust itself into his eyes. To have been fastened upon as an object of preference by a woman who was either above or below restraint, whose appearance displeased, and whose audacious candour shocked him, was odious to his feelings.

But indifference, even contempt,—the fuel of woman's hate,—produced no effect on Isabella ; and the anxious air with which she devoured his

most careless words became so painful to him, that he expostulated with Margaret on the strange fancy of encumbering herself with such an insupportable companion. But she, sweet and unsuspecting creature, sued for her friend, and dwelt on her misfortunes and her loneliness until she succeeded in awakening something like pity in his bosom.

Dislike once conquered, Dalberg began to think less harshly of Isabella; and having made the great leap from repugnance to toleration, went on step by step in kindly feeling, until the favourable impression became—like all impressions produced with difficulty—deep and permanent, taking by degrees a form, which seemed to observant eyes to threaten inquietude, perhaps danger.

One evening, a few persons were assembled in Isabella's saloon: Dalberg and Margaret were of the number. After a short time passed in conversation, music was proposed; and as Vienna was at that period the citadel of sound, a concord of most sweet notes was speedily produced, a rich gush of harmony, making one voice as it burst from the

full choir, and lifting the spirit on the winged mystery of song upwards towards heaven.

Margaret, who felt music as not many do, sat entranced, communing with those sweet and unearthly thoughts which come at the bidding of congenial sounds, and Isabella at her feet, her face resting between her hands, her wild eyes fixed on Dalberg; and in this attitude of passionate watchfulness, she appeared like the living image of an antique statue of mysterious seeming thrown from its base, but with the look of desolate life which the sculptor's magic had bestowed upon it still there; or one left alone in the desert, listening for the voice which was never more to break upon the ear. A harp stood in a corner of the room: some one asked Isabella to play, but she refused, urging her small knowledge of the instrument. Margaret, who had not been before aware of her possessing any musical acquirements, joined in the entreaty, but without success. At length Dalberg approached. "Will it give you pleasure?" she asked, in a low tone. The answer was in one still lower, and she turned to the harp.

Her hands swept over the strings, and after a moment's thought she struck a few bold chords;

then suddenly dropping into a wild and plaintive strain, she seemed to find words as she went along, uttering them—not as if they had been recollected, but as if her emotion, as it rose, created them:—

Shall I never see my hills again,
My native hills ;
Nor hear the dead voice speak,
Nor see the smile awake,
But always be alone ?—ever alone !
How the thought kills !

Never will the beloved come again,
Never again !
His grave is by the side
Of Danube's rolling tide,
And I must be alone,—always alone
With my heart's pain !

At the last word she paused a moment ; sorrowful recollections seemed to crowd upon her. Then pressing her hands against the chords of her harp, as if to deaden the melancholy vibration, she broke out into one of those simple melodies, always vocal to the heart, in which the popular music of Germany is so eminently rich.

Her voice was of no extent ; the tone was muffled ; it was neither remarkable for, nor yet deficient in sweetness, but somewhat like her person,—full of defects so cunningly smoothed and fitted to each

other, that the effect was an unexpected harmony which took the senses by surprise, mastering them by means which owed their power to their strangeness. The airs that she sang were perhaps selected for effect, perhaps stumbled on by accident; there was a wild sentiment of romance about them, to which she gave a singular but touching expression. Some shed tears, others laughed oddly; and while her colour heightened, from the consciousness of success, into a bright tinge seldom visible on her pale cheek, she looked almost beautiful.

Dalberg certainly thought her so, and for the first time; and while her bold shy eyes,—for strange as it may seem they united both expressions,—were turned on him with an uncertain gaze which seemed every moment ready to fly away from its object, Margaret caught the look of admiring, of almost fond delight, with which he contemplated her glowing countenance.

At that moment suspicion entered into her soul, turning a blooming paradise into a waste that never afterwards nourished leaf or flower. Some who loved, and others who envied her, had long before warned her of the dangers which threatened her peace; but as we are apt to measure the

virtues of others by our own, her true heart trusted in the fidelity of her husband's so fully and so fearlessly, that a voice from heaven could scarcely have persuaded her that he who had so long been faithful, could at last be false.

Who can look into the mind of man, or cast the plummet into its depths and sound the bottom? Who can mark the point at which virtue stops, and vice commences? Is man himself aware of it? or does guilt come step by step upon him until, like the hour hand of a watch, it has gone its full time without visible movement? I know not; nor can I tell why some, who have gone on virtuously through a long course of years, strike all at once against that circumstance which could alone perhaps sink them into error.

Poor Margaret! suspicion had (as I have said) crept into her heart; and by the opening which it made, did all blessed things steal out one by one. What a cruel change is that from confidence to mistrust! and then the crueler one from mistrust to conviction! Oppression, injustice, loss of fortune, and all the hardships that wait upon the

change, are as nothing to this break-down of the heart. Then indeed it becomes a desert, “a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing;” for what desolation can equal the desolation of the heart,—is it not greater than that of Babylon?—when all its hopes and its seeming sureties are torn up, and upset, and made “heaps;” when a single word, a half glance, has the agony of ages in it!

Again I say, poor Margaret! Poor indeed,—for she had lost every thing. He who freights many vessels, and sends them to the east and to the west, has, if one be lost, the hope left that others may have reached their ports in safety; but to him who has adventured all in one frail bark, what a sound is that of the tempest! how it howls at his ear with death and ruin in it!

There is no torture like that of jealousy; it admits no pause, no alleviation; it kills alike by doubt and certainty; it will not suffer consolation, but disputes every inch of the scathed and desolate ground it stands upon, against hope, even against truth itself; loathing its wretchedness, yet seeking with morbid eagerness the means of augmenting the proofs on which its sad belief is raised.

Thus it was with Margaret. Her purity of mind, her confidence in Dalberg's love, her ignorance of evil, made her long deaf to the hints that were poured into her ear; the sole feeling awakened by them was that of indignation against those who had dared to give them utterance. But from the moment of doubt to that of certainty was but a step,—a short step, but it led from life to death.

At first, unwilling to believe that she had entirely lost the heart which had been hers so long, she tried by all the sweet means which a devoted nature could devise to win it back again. And for a time with some show of success, when a feeling of shame, a sense of her tried excellence, or the memory of past endearments gave a casual glow to Dalberg's manner; and then a kind look, a gentle word, was heaven to *her* heart, on whom all gentle words were once lavished. But soon the expression of tenderness was received coldly or pettishly, and she who had no other language, sunk into silence.

Raise the oppressed, lift them up, seat them firmly in the high place, and nine times in ten they become oppressors in their turn. Is it the instinct

of vengeance, or the intoxication of power,—or both? I cannot solve the question; others may do so who are better skilled in the labyrinths of the mind; but from the moment in which Isabella felt herself supported by Dalberg, all the violence of her passionate nature broke out in wild idolatry for him, and scorn for others. It seemed as if her guilty love was glory, and that she only lived to worship him, and trample on all beside; and Margaret, who had sought her in her shunned loneliness, needed all the dignity of real virtue, all the eminence of character and station, to depress her proud encroachments.

Yet sometimes in her strange fits of casual sensibility, she would insult Margaret by tears, and wring her hands and cry, “Pardon one whom Heaven has forsaken! It is you whom he loves, not me, poor wretch! How could he think of me, changed and faded as I am, near you who are so bright and beautiful?” And then, perhaps, in the very moment of contrition, of self-abandonment, of despair, her fierce and wayward spirit would suddenly flame out in all the strength of its wild perversity.

A feeling of respect,—perhaps of pity, still gave

a semblance of decency to Dalberg's manner, but Margaret felt that love was past and gone; and whether she was treated with cold civility or marked unkindness, was to her matter of indifference; she was no longer loved, and in that all was said, all that her heart cared for; her presence no longer gave pleasure, her absence pain. She did not stop to gather up the scattered links which might have been still hung together to cheat the eye; the great one was broken, and she looked no farther. But there was no upbraiding, no forbidding gloom; only sweet welcomes covering a breaking heart, and patient efforts to make a home attractive from which, notwithstanding all that tenderness unwearyed and forgiving could devise, Dalberg became daily more estranged.

—IV.—

In the midst of Margaret's progressing sorrow, came a dispatch from the Kloster;—her mother was dying. At that moment all else was forgotten. In an hour she was on the road to her mountains, but Dalberg could not accompany her; affairs (of

state, he said,) detained him ; so she went with only Herman. Alas ! her haste was unavailing : she arrived too late.

Too late ! what a world of woe, deep and irretrievable, lies in these two words. Her mother had been buried the day before : not even a last embrace, a parting blessing ! Nothing but the grave in the chancel of the old church, and the memory in the heart,—the sweet though sorrowful memory of the dear, the good, the departed !

Margaret found her father sitting in the room in which her mother had died ; the windows open, the curtains of the bed drawn back, the summer air blowing through it, and the old man with his hat on and his shooting-dress, as if he had not changed it for many days, his arms hanging listlessly over the sides of his chair, not knowing that the wind blew, or the sun shone,—for within all was darkness ! It seemed as if old age had come suddenly upon him, for till then he had shown few marks of its approach ; but now his hair was white, his eye dim, his cheek pale and sunken. Margaret knelt at his feet, and bathed his hands with her warm tears ; but he did not look at her, he did not return her fond pressure.

“It is your Margaret,” she said; “speak to her.”

“My Margaret!” he faintly exclaimed. “Have you not heard that she is dead?” and then relapsed into a state of stupor.

Even when he became sensible of his daughter’s presence, the consciousness seemed rather to distress than cheer him. “Are you well? (he would say,) are you happy? You look pale, my love, and sad, and there is no one now to nurse you. My tender Margaret! the world, I fear, has used you roughly; but come, we will sit upon her grave, and her spirit will be with us; she will speak to us with the tongue of an angel, and we shall be comforted. At evening in the grey hour, when the sun is gone, she sometimes comes to the old beech that grows into the lake, and communes with me in the language of heaven; she waits for me, but life will not leave me,—this weary, weary life!”

Then he would say in a tone of self upbraiding, “But you would miss me, Margaret, even me,—the old man full of sorrow, the weak prop; yet, I fear me much, your only one. Ah, Margaret! your star is still young in the heavens, but its beauty is darkened; I do not ask you why it is so, yet my dim eyes see it,” and then he would

embrace her fondly, and comfort her, until he himself felt somewhat comforted.

“My God,” prayed Margaret mentally, as she looked upon him, “have pity on me! There is none other left to love me, except my poor Herman,—spare him in mercy!” But he was taken; and when she knelt upon the grave where he rested with his Margaret, she acknowledged that God was merciful, and that her prayer had been selfish. “Pure and beloved ones, (she said,) you are still together; while your Margaret sits, like the poor bird on the forlorn bough, sad and unmated.”

She wrote to Dalberg; he did not answer her: she wrote again, but with the same ill success. It had been her constant habit, whenever she visited the Kloster, to dismiss her carriage and the servants who had accompanied her, immediately on arriving there; for she loved to be served by those who had nursed her in her childhood, and to conform in all things to the custom of her maiden days. Hitherto Dalberg had always been with her; but now, though aware of her deep distress, he neither came nor sent, and the appalling conviction that she was utterly forsaken took possession of her mind.

One day, when she sat in the lonely hall which had formerly been the joyous one, the hall in which she had first seen Dalberg,—thinking of the dead who were in heaven, and of the living who were dead for her,—a letter was put into her hands. It was from one of tried fidelity, and there were things in it which iced her blood. Dalberg's ear was poisoned; he believed her false! The Countess Isabella was the poisoner—and the adored. There was no more disguise, and the once dear Margaret, the flower of the forest, as Dalberg used to call her in the days of love, was now an obstacle to be got rid of.

“False!” exclaimed Margaret as the letter dropped from her hands; “O, if it be falsehood to love as I have done, then what is truth?” and she blushed, though none were there to see her, at the foul accusation. At first, her whole frame shook with terror; but indignation soon mastered dread, and the sudden courage which springs from the sense and suffering of injustice, animated her to immediate exertion. She determined at once to quit the Kloster, and return with all the speed she could make to the capital. Horses were with some difficulty procured, and an old carriage which her

mother had been in the habit of using whenever any peculiar circumstance obliged her to go out of her immediate neighbourhood, was put in readiness.

“ I shall never see you again !” she said, as she looked at the still lake with the autumn leaves floating on its bosom, “ never again ! It is all over now ;—all who loved me, rest here in this blessed spot !”

“ Mother,” said Herman ; “ they are in heaven, and heaven is every where.”

“ It is true,” replied Margaret, fondly caressing him, “ heaven is every where ; and they who dwell in it have but arrived within the starry porch a little before those who are now toiling up the same steep path by which they have already mounted.”

The carriage waited for her at the garden gate. As she descended the old stone steps, she stopped to gather some roses from a bush which her mother had planted. “ How sorrowful it is, (she said,) to see all this for the last time ; but I shall never forget it, it is all in my heart, the form of every tree, the perfume of every flower. She is gone who planted these roses ; their fragile beauty has out-lived the heart that had such treasures of love in it ! Herman, do you remember the evening when

we rowed across the lake to see the woodman's wife who, we feared, was dying?"

"Yes, and we found her better; and you, dear mother, were so glad. I have not forgotten it, nor how the moon shone upon the waters as if it were at the bottom of the lake; and we all sang—my grandfather the loudest—But forgive me, I am wrong to make you think of it."

"Well, that night,—that night which was so beautiful, that moment when we were all so happy, I had a presage. Herman, if I should die—I do not mean now, (seeing that his eyes filled with tears,) for I am much better indeed; but when I am old and die, you will cause me to be brought here, and placed near them:—promise me."

Herman pressed his face against hers, and made no answer; but he grasped her hand strongly, and Margaret considered the pledge as given.

—V.—

It was evening when Margaret quitted the Kloster. The solemn forest spread itself out like the arms of time, and the dark clouds rolled over

it; but as twilight deepened the wind dropped, and the clouds dividing, showed the stars glimmering in the blue heavens, and the moon shining in the midst of them.

Margaret looked back, as the carriage drove from the gate, at the window of her mother's chamber. "Who is it, (she asked,) who stands there? It is a man—it is my father! O Lord, how pale he looks!"

"It is only the shadow of a bough," said Herman.

"It is no more," returned Margaret, rubbing her eyes, and looking up again; "but I am so weak, the very moonshine that I used to love seems to me so wan and fearful, so full of presages.—Pardon me, my good child, I shall be stronger presently."

It was her last moment of feebleness; and she whose timid spirit had looked at distant peril as we do at the wild beast in its cage, shuddering to think even of its chained force, found, when the encounter came, the strength that is born of danger.

All that night, and all the next day, and for four more tedious ones, they pursued their jour-

ney; for their horses went but slowly, and the state of the cross roads, at that season deep and rugged, much impeded their progress.

On the seventh evening, just as they had entered a village about a league distant from the spot at which their road fell into the highway leading to Vienna, the old carriage, which had long been in a tottering state, broke down. The case was hopeless; there was no one near who had skill enough to prop it up again, and even had there been, the chances were that its creaking frame could not have supported the shock of reparation. Margaret was obliged to pass the night in a poor hovel, but a hovel or a palace was the same to her; daylight was all that she wished for, and its long delay seemed increased by her impatience.

At length the morning broke, and taking with her the trusty servant who had attended her from the Kloster, she quitted the village on foot, accompanied by Herman. After more than an hour's walking, they gained a small town on the high-road, and there Margaret, overcome by fatigue, and weakened by fever which was gaining fast upon her, sat down on a bench before the door of a cottage isolated from the street, to wait the

approach of some public vehicle which might convey her to Vienna. After a long watching, one appeared : it was empty. Margaret and Herman got into it ; and bidding an affectionate farewell to the old servant, who stood at the door in tears, took the road to the capital.

It was her intention to have gone at once to a garden house,—a gift of Dalberg's, which she possessed in the skirts of the city, for she feared to bring suspicion on him by returning to his home in so poor a plight ; but as she approached the suburbs her strength failed. For many hours she had struggled courageously against the progress of a disease which was rapidly undermining the principle of life ; had tried to talk, and think, and act it down ; but vainly. The quick eye and feverish colouring, the hurried yet interrupted articulation and strange flow of spirits, had already alarmed Herman, to whom acquaintance with the aspect of sorrow had given an early habit of reflection. He saw that she was in a state of unnatural excitement, and while he gazed upon her in mute anxiety, she suddenly turned as pale as death, faintly saying, " Take me somewhere ; I can go no farther," and then sunk back as if dying.

Herman stopped the carriage before the door of a humble-looking house, into which Margaret was carried and placed upon a bed in a mean chamber, where the usual remedies were speedily administered, at first almost hopelessly, but afterwards with some show of success. At length her senses returned, and she expressed a desire to be left alone with her son; and while he hung over her pillow, she took from her bosom a note addressed to Dalberg, saying as she gave it to him, "Now—at once." Then raising herself a little, and fondly kissing his inclined cheek, she added in a weak interrupted voice, "I bless you! May God also, my child! my good and dear one!" and then relapsed into insensibility.

But she was again brought to life, and even seemed a little better. Herman, who would not leave her bed-side for a moment, procured a messenger to whom he entrusted Margaret's letter, charging him to deliver it into the hands of the Count Dalberg himself. But the count was absent, and the servants were strangers, who either did not know where he was, or had been cautioned against indiscretion. The letter was brought back again, but Margaret did not know it; her beauti-

ful mind was gone, and even the voice of her son found no living echo in her heart,—no recognition, no reply !

It has already been told how Margaret died on the night of the great rejoicings, when a new emperor was crowned, and music sounded in the streets, and fire-works blazed in the air, and Herman sat alone in the house—for all besides were gone out to see the show — by the death-bed of his mother. He buried her in a humble grave, without a name or other ornament than the flowers which grew about it ; but he had not forgotten his engagement, and the means of fulfilling it now wholly occupied his thoughts.

After much reflection, he had opened his mother's letter, thinking that perhaps there might be something in it essential for him to know and act upon. But it was only the melancholy record of wrongs inhumanly inflicted, and meekly borne ; and from that moment he determined never to accept assistance from his father, or solicit love. From that same moment he disclaimed a name which had become hateful to him ; his young soul burned with indignation ; boy as he was when

he had quitted Vienna, yet the coldness with which he had seen his mother treated, lacerated his heart ; and though her fine nature had disdained complaint, he saw the sorrow that spoke without a tongue in her heavy eye ; he read it all—the whole story of her grief, in her closed lips, and viewing her as one akin to angels, all the respect, all the natural affection which he had felt towards a father, who, though lately cold, had once been all kindness, all love, could not quell within him the reproachful feeling which, while he condemned it as irreverent, even unnatural, rose in his heart when he remembered his mother's uncomplained-of wrongs.

But now she was dead—killed, as he doubted not, by his father's cruelty. His heart had battled long against this conviction ; but it stuck fast within it, and there it lay festering. To his young and romantic mind rank and name were nothing, and he at once determined to abjure both, to owe all to himself, and to take no other armour against the rough chances of fortune, than that of virtue and the memory of his mother's fate.

All he asked of Providence was life and strength, that he might toil manfully until he had obtained

sufficient to fulfil her last desire, and remove her dear remains from their unhonoured grave to the chancel of the Kloster. For her fair fame he feared nothing; the purity of her life was its best guarantee. The world, he well knew, would decide with equity between her innocence and her rival's guilt; the broken heart had put down envy, the grave extinguished it, and she, co-mate of angels, would (he felt assured) be honoured as a sacrifice without spot. He was now fifteen; but his reason, matured by circumstances, belonged to riper years. His first act—when he could think of acting—was to write to his father, informing him of his mother's death, and of his own determination to withdraw himself from parental authority; and then, having thanked him with a simplicity which seemed still to belong to childhood for the love he had once borne him, to bid him farewell for ever.

It occurred to Herman, that if his father should cause him to be pursued with the intention of compelling his return, he might perhaps find means of tracing him to the spot where Margaret had expired; so he determined to hide himself in some obscure corner beyond the reach of rumour. To

the Kloster he could not go, for there search was certain; he resolved therefore to journey on as far as his strength and slight resources would carry him, and then to engage himself for whatever work he might be thought most suited, until he had gained enough for the accomplishment of a purpose which wholly absorbed his mind. With this intention, he disposed of the few things which remained to him after having discharged the expenses of his mother's short illness and humble burial. Of the little that was left, he deposited three parts with a person in the neighbourhood, who had undertaken to weed her grave, plant fresh flowers on it, and encircle it with a fence of closely-twisted osiers; retaining for himself barely enough for a few days' scanty maintenance. But his purpose occupied every chink of his heart, and left no room for weakness or repining.

—VI.—

At length, after many hardships, disappointments, and privations, Herman found himself installed in the work-room of a painter,—an obscure

man, but full of the sentiment of his art; who found in his young scholar a knowledge of the principles of drawing, and a certain refinement of taste, which at first greatly surprised him. But he soon perceived that Herman, (or Frederick, as he called himself,) was not what he appeared to be; and without coarsely wrenching out his secret, became sufficiently master of it to know that the aim of his labour was to acquire a certain sum, and his object the fulfilment of a solemn promise by which he considered himself inviolably bound.

His talents, industry, and exemplary conduct, added to the interest inspired by his frank and noble countenance, and by the singularity of his motive, influenced his master so much in his favour, that he freely offered him a loan, which his narrow circumstances could ill afford. But Herman had resolved that to himself alone he would owe the power of fulfilling the engagement, which time seemed to render holier and more binding. He therefore, having thanked his master, gratefully but decidedly declined the friendly offer; asking at the same time his aid in the disposal of some sketches which he had made in the neighbourhood of their dwelling.

The painter expressed his surprise that one so diligent in his employer's service should have found leisure to work for himself, and learned, not without a feeling of respect, that the largest portion of the time which others gave to sleep, he had devoted to toil; that it had been his constant habit to work for some hours after the family of his master had retired to rest; to rise at daybreak, descend without noise from the window of his chamber, which was near the ground, and seek such subjects as he loved in the fields and woods that surrounded their modest habitation. For the quiet hamlet, in which it occupied a sequestered spot, was hidden in a fresh and solitary country full of pastoral images,—of delicious pictures, largely and graciously traced by that pencil which dips into the rainbow for its hues, and takes the broad earth for its canvas.

In this beautiful solitude, Herman renewed companionship with things of dear account to his young fancy,—the opening day, the rich prelude light, the golden sunrise, and the warm glow of its decline. At night, when the open fields were full of moonshine and the woods of darkness, he used to walk alone with nature, looking into her

face, and noting down its varying expression. He looked into the air too, till, like Velasquez, he learned to paint it; and from such studies he gleaned many things which common observers recognised when presented to them, though till then unconscious of having noticed their existence. It was to this nice scrutiny of natural objects that his sketches owed their character of intimate reality, which charmed in spite of a still defective execution, and procured for them ready purchasers in the nearest town; while his youth, his melancholy aspect, and the mystery attached to his story, rendered him an object of interest to the few with whom, in his recluse position, he had chanced to be brought in contact.

But Herman shunned the sympathy that would have forced itself upon him, or repulsed it with coldness. He desired to be beholden only to himself, and to accept no other aid than that which he had asked of his master, whom he loved and honoured. The obtrusive pity of some, and the officious charity of others, were alike offensive to him; he had but one thought, one wish, one object in all that he did,—the accomplishment of his silent but sacred engagement. And the inter-

meddling world, who would come at the root of his sorrow and heal it in their own way, roused a feeling in his breast which he took no pains to conceal. For sorrow is unceremonious, it is bold; it forgets forms, it cares not for opinion, and never suspects that the hour will come when the idle press of every-day matter will again choke up the avenues to feeling, and relegate to the oblivion of the past the dominion which it believed eternal.

But in its hour of dominion what singleness, what grandeur is in real grief! how entirely it disengages the mind from the small fibres of vanity, which in happy moments twine themselves about it! what elevation in its simplicity, what strength in its prostration! This boy, in his deep sorrow, had more real dignity about him, than many a sovereign who sits upon his throne in the full complement of purple and ermine; but grief has its weak side, and if under its influence the vulgar become noble, and the dull eloquent, the injured also become unforgiving. "Evil be to him who has done this!" is oftener uttered by the wounded than "Heaven forgive him!" Grief softens the heart to the grief of others, but har-

dens it to the cause of its own individual suffering, if that cause be man.

Even Herman's generous nature was not proof against the influence of this feeling; his mother's wrongs and his father's cruelty rankled together in his heart, and festered into anger; and neither the instinct of affection—the natural touch—nor the sense of duty, could overcome an almost vindictive sentiment, which time seemed rather to strengthen than subdue.

—VII.—

Two years of unceasing toil, of constant privation, had put Herman in possession of the sum which he believed necessary for the completion of his long-cherished purpose; and bidding a grateful farewell to his good master, he set out on foot upon his pious pilgrimage.

His heart was lighter than it had been for many a day; its dear project was on the point of being accomplished: and when at length, after a tedious and toilsome journey, the spires of Vienna appeared in the distance, he bounded forward more like a

lover who returned to the mistress of his heart, than a son who sought the grave of his mother. He did not enter the suburb, but took at once a by-path that led to the humble cemetery. The spot which he sought was easily distinguished by its flowery sod and osier fence, now grown into a bower. Herman approached it with a feeling of reverence, not unmixed with awe; and kneeling down beside the turf, wept and prayed out of the fulness of his heart, and took some of the earth from the grave, and placed it in his bosom as a holy relic; and then rose comforted, and went into the town.

He sought out the chamber in which his mother had died, and prayed in it, for it seemed to him a temple sanctified by the translation of a soul to heaven. His first step was to obtain permission to exhume the body, which had been committed to the earth as that of the unknown Margaret Werner; and then, in pious thankfulness, he (with the assistance of two others) performed the solemn office at day-break, before the world was stirring; and having enclosed the coffin within another of more durable materials and finer workmanship, and placed it on a suitable hearse covered with an

ample pall of black velvet, he began his homeward journey, following on foot the heavy movement of the dilatory machine.

He no longer dreaded to approach the Kloster, for he judged that if he had ever been sought for there, the search must have been long since over, and probably even his existence forgotten in the new ties which his father had doubtless formed. On that score, therefore, he was tranquil, and in the general temper of his mind almost happy. His soul overflowed with melancholy, in which delight was mingled. Was he not again alone in the world with her whom he best loved? Did not the sun shine again upon her? Alas, no! but he could fancy it; and hour after hour he would follow the hearse, cheating his heart with some such illusion as that which sends the poor bird back, with a precious seed in his bill, to his stiffened mate, and opens the gush of song to which no loving sound will ever make reply.

By night he rested usually in the outbuildings of some lonely farm-house, for none cared to admit the corpse of a stranger within their dwelling. Those were dreary hours when he watched by the side of the coffin in some gloomy spot, with a dim

lamp before him throwing fantastic shadows on the bare walls ; but he prayed and was comforted. Sometimes he thought that she was near him, and that her sweet consolings entered into his heart ; and at such moments he felt as if some good spirit had folded him in its wings, and carried him up from earth to the starred heaven where the blessed abide for ever.

One night, as he watched in an untenanted stable, he heard the sound of voices speaking loudly in the road near to it ; and looking through a crevice, saw by the light of the moon a berline surrounded by servants, and the people of the farm running to and fro with lights as if some accident had happened. This proved to be the case ; and while the disaster was repairing, a lady descended from the carriage assisted by a gentleman, and approached the house ; but to cross the yard would—the farmer said—be inconvenient, as it was wet, and foul with straw and other country litter,—in fact, impassable for delicate footsteps. So he opened the door of the stable to let the strangers through by a cleaner path ; and Herman, seeing them approach, flapped his hat over his eyes, and hid himself in the shade of a dark recess.

The lady put her foot upon the threshold and started back, screaming out in a voice that made Herman recoil with horror, "Christ, save me! — what is that?"

"It is only a young man," said the farmer, carelessly, "to whom we have given a night's lodging."

"But the coffin?"

"The coffin?" said the farmer, in some confusion, for he feared that the sight of it might scare away his guests and spoil his intended harvest; "O, that's nothing; it's only (as I have said) a young man travelling homewards with the body of his mother, who died in some place where she was a stranger; and so he must needs humour her last fancy, which it seems was, that her bones should be laid with her people. That's all, madam; nothing more than that,—nothing fearful or unnatural, as one may say." And then in a lower tone, "Some poor body, I reckon, for he neither eats or drinks to signify; and he who drives the hearse has not yet got at his name."

The lady advanced rapidly, and approached Herman, whose face was totally concealed from view by his flapped hat and the darkness of the spot on which he stood. "Good young man,"

she said, in a voice full of emotion, "pray for me. Your dead mother is more honoured than many living ones. Pray for me, sir," she continued, trying to take his hand, which he withheld, "for I have great need of help."

"Then," replied Herman, in a stifled tone, "address yourself to God; He will aid you."

"Not me—not me," she said hurriedly. "But you, who stand here beside the coffin of your mother, have you not a voice in heaven? Pure and pious soul!" she added, her voice rising to enthusiasm, "yes, and one that will be heard amongst angels. Give me your blessing, sir; the sacredness of your office will make it holy," and she would have knelt, but her companion approached, and gently taking her hand, prevented her.

"At least," she said, as he drew her softly back, "one word in your prayers—one word for a great sinner."

"If you can also say a sincere penitent," answered Herman in a mild and solemn tone, "doubtless He who alone can pardon has already heard you."

She would have spoken, but her companion again urged her on. "Come, my love," he said, "we intrude too long on the sacredness of grief." And

casting another look on the coffin, a look with a strange farewell in it, an almost fond farewell,—as if she guessed its tenant,—she suffered herself to be drawn away from the spot.

Herman looked after them as they went towards the house. The space was full of moonshine—cold and ghastly ; and as they passed under the arched entrance, going from light into deep shadow, the lady's tall figure and white floating robe looked spectral. But she was no spectre, and Herman knew her well, though awfully changed, to be the same Isabella whose wild necromancy had spirited away his mother's peace, and her life with it ; and he who called her by sweet names was his father, and the husband of that fair Margaret who lay there in her coffin murdered by their wickedness !

It was a terrible moment ; to see one by whom he had been so fondly loved pass before him without acknowledgment of eye or heart, to see him turn away from the coffin of *her* who had been the wife of his early love, as if it were a loathsome sight to look upon ; to see almost at his feet the false one who had driven him into exile, and made him desolate ! Strange trick of fate ! untoward moment ! which crossed with desperate thoughts the mind of Her-

man ; but he prayed for strength, and it was given him.

At length the old spire appeared above the woods, and presently the glistening lake in the distance, and then the home of Herman's heart, and all its dear familiar features, coming out one by one upon him as if each would give him a welcome of its own. But it was his mother's hearse that he followed,—the mother who had so often borne him in her arms along that same path !

Every tree had a story of the past, every leaf a blessing in it. Old friends and old recollections spoke to him in every dappled bud, in the perfume of every field-flower ; and then the memory of the dead came upon him,—not as it was wont to do, with grave-clothes and the clinging earth about it, but like a spirit soaring upwards in robes of glory amidst the music of angels, or shining like a bright star amongst the luminous flowers of paradise.

So much had three years increased his stature, darkened his cheek, and altered his appearance, that many passed him on the road who had been the playfellows of his childhood without recol-

lecting him. It was the friendly curate whose instinct of affection found out the boy's face through its premature shading. Kind man ! how he joyed to see Herman back again ; but when he knew that it was Margaret who lay within the coffin, the same Margaret whom he remembered a child, a bride, a mother, he turned away and wept.

And now Herman saw the dear wish of his heart accomplished, and Margaret laid in the chancel by the side of the old major and her mother. Those who had known her from her childhood stood round as mourners, and the curate would have pronounced a discourse which he had composed for the sad occasion, and in which all the tenderness of his heart and the devotional glow of his pious mind were blended together ; but when he ascended the pulpit, his eye happened to rest upon the bier, and the tide of memory coming strong upon him, his voice faltered ; the words which he would have uttered passed out of his mind, and pointing to it, he sunk back in speechless sorrow.

The ceremony was over, the grave closed, the last flowers of autumn, for it was now the fall of

the year, strewed upon it, and Herman returned to the Kloster, and for that day to the society of the dead. The next morning the old curate, Emanuel Reichter, came to him, accompanied by a young man named Rheinart Waldeck, and placed in his hands certain sums arising from the produce of lands, of which the domain of the Kloster formed a part, that had belonged to his grandfather, and which since the major's death had gone on prospering under their joint care. "For (said the curate) we wished that nothing should degenerate through neglect, but that whenever you returned to claim your lawful right, you should receive it unimpaired; and now we give up our trust in a rich and productive state, and with the hope that our dear Herman will live amongst us as his grandfather did, blessing and blest."

Herman was surprised and touched; it had never occurred to him that the Kloster was his; he knew nothing of his hereditary rights. His mother's deep distress of mind had left no room for worldly thoughts, and her death would have forever shut out the chance of his having discovered it, had not her last wish directed his steps again to her native home. He embraced his friends with

tenderness and gratitude, and his long-closed heart opened to the warm and cheering feeling with which those, who cherish the love of independence and the high privilege of usefulness, receive the power of enjoying the one, and exercising the other. He now learned, that a short time after his mother's death, a messenger had arrived from the Count Dalberg charged with despatches for him ; but that unable to obtain any information as to the object of his mission, he had, after a day or two spent in useless inquiries, departed for Vienna.

It seemed probable to Herman, that after this abortive and unrepeated attempt, none other would be made. At all events he determined to establish himself in the old Kloster, and take the chance of the future. It was to him the land of memory, and as yet no other feeling had risen up in his heart to meddle with the past—his book of life! the written page on which he dwelt unceasingly.

Within sight of the Kloster was the village of Rosengarten, and in this village was a garden house in which Rheinart Waldeck lived with his young sister Mina. This Rheinart was the little boy who,

on the night when Dalberg first craved hospitality at the Kloster, sat on a stool beating time while Margaret danced, and puffing manfully through a pasteboard trumpet; but nineteen years had passed away since that evening, and he was now a wise and learned man, accounted rich in his simple neighbourhood, and noted for his efficient kindness to all who stood in need of his assistance. But above all for his tender care of a sister fourteen years younger than himself, and whom—the parent props being both withdrawn—he sustained and sheltered, as the strong oak of the forest does the tender fibrous plant that clings to it for protection. They were all that remained of a once numerous family, and their mutual love was that of orphans, who had no claim but on each other's heart.

The word charming seemed to have been invented for Mina. Her features were not remarkable for regularity, but her fresh, gay smile was full of innocent sweetness; and there was a grace in her most careless look or movement, which it would have been impossible for another to have imitated, or even described. No one cried out on first seeing her, "What a beautiful creature!" but every one wished to see her again; the transparency of her

blush, the pretty kind look in her eyes, her sunny hair, sweet voice, and most delicious laugh, were all heart-baits, of whose power she was far from being aware. There was not a girl in the district with any pretensions to beauty, who was not more showy than Mina; many were perhaps handsomer, but none were so engaging. She had the prettiest way imaginable of saying and doing every thing,—a way of her own, that like the grace of childhood could not be taught, and like it too, was all the sweeter and prettier for being out of rule and regulated practice.

Old Reichter used to call her his fairy queen, and could find no cake so good, or drink so cool, as that prepared by Mina, who was manager and mistress of her brother's domestic concerns, and (her baby years considered) the best and thriftiest in the canton. Herman taught her to draw; and before he had been three months at the Kloster, had sketched her figure in all its habitual changes of action and repose; in front, in profile, full length, half length, and three-quarters; sitting, standing, looking up, and looking down; until he had filled a fair-sized portfolio with the prettiest outlines imaginable. But she was still to him only a

charming child, while he was to her (to her fancy, I would say,) a grave philosopher, one who talked of trees and flowers not merely as of things green, and fresh, and sweet smelling, but as if they were books, in which men could read the secrets of nature. And yet she loved to listen to him; and when they sat at evening in the perfumed porch of their cottage, and that he talked with Rheinart of the starry heavens and the world beyond the grave, her eyes often filled with tears, which she would wipe away, wondering why they should be there while her heart was so happy.

—VIII.—

We must now return to Dalberg, and to the moment when Herman's letter conveyed to him the intelligence of Margaret's death, and his son's voluntary exile. Then indeed his heart smote him. He had never believed the tales poured into his ear,—how could he?—but feeble in principle and strong in passion, he had seized upon the first pretext that presented itself to throw off the innocent wife, whose sole crime was the involun-

tary, but to a fickle mind most heinous one, of having outlived his liking. But when he knew her dead, then came her fair image back upon his mind in its first beautiful investments, with the gloss of youth, the glow of love upon it; and he shrunk with horror from himself.

In this interval of strong though short repentance, he caused an anxious search to be made after his son, but could discover no trace of him. The remote spot in which Herman had niched himself, a corner scarcely traced on the map of the empire, entirely escaped his notice; and after some time spent in fruitless inquiry, he gave him up as lost for ever. Nor could Dalberg blame the spirit in which his son had abandoned him—perhaps he honoured it,—for none could hold more in horror than he did, the cruelty which had driven Margaret to despair; none could find in it with the same conscience-quickenened, bitter readiness, the entire justification of Herman's conduct.

For one who, having sinned, repents deeply and strives not to conceal the haggard aspect of his soul, there is still a hold left on human sympathy, if he have but courage to seize it by becoming his own accuser. Dalberg did so, firmly and boldly,

and the whole power of his mind was bent to the purpose of criminating himself, and raising altars to her purity whose image he had before trodden under foot. But as none had credited the slanderous fabrications, there were none to be convinced of their falsehood; and he found that Margaret's chaste name was held in such bright honour, that no calumny, however cunningly devised, could sully its transparency. With Isabella remained the credit of the invention, and with himself the scandal of an affected belief, which though base enough to feign, he never for a moment felt.

He fled from her; she followed. He shut his doors against her, but she found, or forced, an entrance. He believed her far away; and she was at his feet in an agony of grief, with the great excuse, to which the vanity of man is rarely inaccessible,—the excuse of love on her lips, and its boundless influence in her eyes. Had she denied, or sought to palliate, her guilt, he would have spurned her; but she tore off the wrappings of deception, and baring the foul spot in her heart, cried out in a voice of overwhelming passion, “I am a wretch, not fit to live in the light of day ;

but I have greatly loved, and for the sake of that love, forgive me.”

He did so ; and once forgiven, she became again omnipotent. When we dare not repress a feeling in our own breast, nor check its utterance on the lips of another, lest it should become extinct, we must submit to be subjugated by it. It was thus with Dalberg. Perhaps, like most men who, having left the period of youth behind them, find themselves the object of an interest which they had no longer counted on inspiring, he became intoxicated by the fresh and precious incense, and that a breath which, when a thousand breaths ministered to the flame would have passed away unheeded, had become as a rare and costly perfume that his vanity delighted to inhale. Perhaps he still loved Isabella,—at all events he married her ; and though ungracious feelings rose sometimes in their hours of domestic intercourse to the surface, yet her influence over his mind continued undiminished.

There were moments when remorse seemed to take the lead of all other emotions in her wild mind, and it was remarked that her countenance occasionally exhibited traces of deep distress, strikingly at variance with the splendour by which

she was surrounded. The violent shocks to which her uncontrouled feelings continually exposed her feeble frame, had shattered it incurably, and broken down, before its time, whatever beauty she might have once possessed. Her wasted form had now but little attraction; the expression of her eye had become fearful, her lip livid, her mind disturbed; and in the van of those fierce phantoms that continually haunted her diseased imagination, stood jealousy stinging her with the thought, that the wrong which she had done another might be one day paid back upon herself.

Sometimes she would cry out in an ecstasy of passion, "I have killed the sweetest soul that ever the earth held; and he for whose love I murdered her, abhors and shuns me. Fool that I was, to think that he who had been false to Margaret, could ever have been true to me!" And then sinking on her knees, "Blessed creature! (she would exclaim,) in thy heaven above, pray for the guilty one!"

Things were in this state, when an accident brought about the meeting in the stable of the isolated farm-house, and Dalberg stood unknowingly beside the coffin of his wife—his once, and

now again beloved Margaret ; for not a day passed in which his upbraiding heart, wearied and disgusted by the wild caprice and untoward violence of Isabella, did not return back to the gone-by days of truth and happiness, when his sweet companion and true love made life a paradise. But he knew it not, neither did Isabella ; yet the sight of a son watching by the coffin of his mother, touched the near concern of her heart, and peopled her mind with fancies.

“ Did you not think,” she asked, “ of Margaret and Herman ? There was no other mourner but him, when she died.”

“ Talk not thus, my love,” said Dalberg, well knowing which way her wild imaginings tended. “ That dear Margaret whom we both loved, though a stronger passion mastered our reason, is happy—”

“ Ay, happier than we are, who sent her to heaven before her time. O God ! how sad she looked when last we saw her, and yet how beautiful ! Was she not beautiful, Dalberg ?”

“ Infinitely beautiful !” he replied in a tone of profound tenderness.

“ You think so ; and you have the heart to tell

it me! And I am—what am I like? A fiend, a fury, is it not? Ah, you hate me! I see that you do,—I have long seen it; the dead, the living, all are dearer to you than the wretched Isabella! You will be glad, Dalberg, when I die; I know it. Be satisfied; I shall not long cross your happiness, and then, when I am gone, you will think of me too; you will remember my unbounded love. No, no; not even that. There will be another, and you will laugh with joy that I am no longer in the way with my pale and fearful visage!”

“My dearest friend, how can you say such cruel things?”

“Do you find them cruel? I think them kind, soft, gentle. Ah, it is you who are cruel.”

“To you, Isabella? O no; I would rather die than be so.”

“Indeed!”

“Indeed,” repeated Dalberg with solemnity. “But why have you ever doubted my sincerity? Do you not see how your sorrow saddens my heart, and how, when you are happy, I rejoice—”

“Rejoice!” she repeated wildly; “is not that a new word? How magnificent is the sound! like a voice beyond the grave,—up in the heavens;

but it is not for me, it will never speak to me in its exulting music." And then came an agony of tears, followed by a tremulous low-spirited calm.

In this way passed their lives for three more years, when there appeared at Vienna a person whose existence seemed a problem. None knew who he was, or where he came from ; yet all opened their doors to him as if by general agreement.

He was a man already past the prime of life, but of a distinguished appearance, and very remarkable for a singular expression of eye, which those who had the courage to examine it, called appalling. His manners were fine, his habits profuse, his conversational powers of the highest order ; he had seen all things, read all books, visited all countries. His knowledge seemed less like the accumulation of a single mind—a single life, than the aggregate of ages. All wondered at his instruction, all were astounded at the resources of a memory, which seemed like a spirit that had been born with time and gone along with it in watchfulness. He called himself the Count Camillo Origo, said he was of Italy, but told no

more; nor did any one dare to bait for his secret, for even in his most unreserved moments he was unapproachable to all attempts at familiarity.

Much was said about him in various ways,—much conjectured; but in general he was spoken of as an accomplished traveller, in whose society there was a spell for which even the powerful charm of his conversation could not altogether account. It was the mystery perhaps which surrounded him, or the rivetting eye, or the melodious voice,—full, and clear, and sweet, like a pipe played on by an enchanted breath; none knew exactly where the magic lay, but all felt its influence. When he entered a saloon, the great, the brilliant, the beautiful were left without a circle; all thronged round one to whose name all ears were strangers, and who said nothing for himself. Many imagined him a sovereign prince, travelling incognito, and sought to find out if any such was missing from his habitual station, but without success; all were accounted for, and the mystery, both of himself and his resources, remained still unexplained. At length, after having been alternately set down as a masquerading sovereign, an exiled patriot, and a wandering jew, he was fast

dwindling into a Venetian alchemist, or a German ghost-seer, when a circumstance took place which turned the tide of curiosity into another channel.

—IX.—

Isabella had been for some time in a weak state of health, prone to solitary musings, averse to society, and when in it, silent and thoughtful. In such moments her soul seemed to talk with itself, and to pour back its sorrows,—perhaps its agonies, into the source from which they had flowed. But these mute discoursings were fed by grievous matter, and there were hours when the babble of the day, with which the few who formed her intimate circle tried to divert her melancholy, was seized upon with avidity, as offering the chance of a temporary distraction from the wild broodings of fixed despondency.

The Italian count was of course the theme of many a story, and to a mind like hers,—worn out and thirsting for new emotions, the idea of his mysterious position, his unknown name, of the reported magic of his speech contrasted with his

close reserve, seemed full of pungent interest, and powerfully excited her curiosity. Dalberg had known the Count Camillo soon after his arrival at Vienna, and, like all others, had been fascinated. He had at first conjectured Origo to be the chief, or else the powerful agent of some secret, but widely extended political sect; but whatever may have occurred, or whether any thing had done so, to strengthen the conjecture, remained a secret which he carefully locked within his breast. But it was remarked by many, that his acquaintance with the stranger had suddenly ripened into intimacy; and others hinted at their having been known to meet together at hours and places, which gave a suspicious colouring to their intercourse.

An evening was appointed for the introduction of the Count Camillo into Isabella's private circle, and Dalberg had tried, by many minute details and fine-pointed touches, to make her in some degree familiar with the singular person who was to be on that night presented to her.

"It is strange," she said, "what you tell me." And then, as if in a moment of absence, "I never knew but one, and he is dead."

“Who?” inquired the count.

“What have I said?” she cried, in an alarmed tone.

“Nothing particular—only you spoke of some one who was dead.”

“The dead,” she answered, with a strange expression of voice, “are not babblers; neither am I.” Dalberg looked at her thoughtfully, but was silent.

It grew late. The guests had been long assembled in Isabella’s apartment; they had divided into groupes; some played at cards, others conversed, but the expected came not. The countess had watched the door restlessly, but the common faces of every evening alone appeared at it. At length it seemed as if there were no more to come; the ante-room was silent, no foot crossed it, and the men in waiting yawned and gathered round the stove, as if the business of the evening was over.

Isabella felt relieved; increasing suspense was bringing dread with it, an indefinite shapeless dread, she thought, but knew it by a strange feel at her heart to be gaining size and vigour. She had known too much of mystery, and of the

frightful things which make it a necessity, not to fear those who, like herself, had bought its mask and wore it. Two persons were engaged at play in a distant part of the room; Isabella placed herself beside their table, and seemed to watch their game. On the opposite wall was a large mirror, which reflected the interior of the saloon; her eyes chanced to rest there. Some one who stood behind her chair was visible in it: there was a low shriek heard, but so quickly smothered that none knew from whence it came, and at the same moment Dalberg approached, and presented the Count Camillo Origo.

Isabella rose and turned a ghastly look upon him. She was as white as death itself, and her black eyes had an expression in them that none had ever remarked there before,—a lurking, deadly look, dragged as it were by sharp occasion from its hiding-place, and human only in its terror. Origo was calm as usual, his voice firm, his countenance motionless. He addressed her in general terms, and in the tone which a man of high breeding naturally assumes when conversing with a lady of distinguished station. No one was near enough to observe the strange look of scrutiny that seemed

to darken the cold enamel of his eye, or the bitter irony that lurked in the corners of the thin compressed lip.

“I have been admiring (said he) the rich and beautiful hangings of your saloon; they are of that rare and delicate tissue of the Levant, which is seldom seen but in the East. Once only have I met with it in Europe, and that was at Venice, in an ancient palace of the Contarini. I remember having remarked it; it was at the time when the strange adventure of the young Olympia Doni was the talk of the day, because there was something woven in the tissue,—a story or a likeness, I forget now what,—that had some accidental link of union with her adventure. You have perhaps been at Venice, madam?”

“No, never—yes—once, but long ago.”

“Then you do not probably remember that ancient palace?”

“The ancient palace,” she repeated, starting as if from a dream, “on the dark canal? Yes,—I remember it; I think I see it now, and that its—”

“You are ill, madam,” interrupted the stranger in a peculiar tone; “the heat oppresses you.”

“Good heaven!” exclaimed Dalberg, who at

that moment came towards them, "what is this? How you tremble, Isabella; you must retire, my love."

"Open the window," said Origo calmly; "the countess faints."

She was carried into her chamber, and when her senses began to return, Dalberg dismissed her attendants and remained alone with her. Her first words were incoherent, yet too full of meaning; but as her mind settled, she became silent and buried in thought. At length she said in a solemn tone,

"Do you know who the guest is, that you have received into your house?"

"Who? the Count Origo?"

"The same."

"So far as by high report,—the report which the world makes of one who is of fine wit and noble bearing."

"Noble! But have you marked the eye? is it not the eye of a dead man,—of one who died in sin? Is he alive, think you?" 'Then with a wild look, "You would say *yes*; but I think otherwise. I, who knew him living, too dearly bought preposterous knowledge!"

“You are feverish, Isabella ; you want repose.”

“Repose ! O, never more ! But leave me,—I have much to think of. Leave me, I beseech you.”

Dalberg looked irresolute.

“You do not go. Why do you persecute me ? I shall go mad,—I shall expire at your feet.”

Dalberg moved towards the door. “And yet it is cruel (he said) to leave you thus.”

“Cruel ! O no ; kind—kind,” and she pushed him anxiously forward. He would have taken her hand, but she withdrew it. “No tenderness, (she said in a hollow tone,) that would kill me. No good night—no blessing. O Lord ! to talk of blessings now !”

Dalberg shuddered. There was something in her look and voice that chilled his blood ; but he submitted to her desire, fearing that opposition might goad her into madness. An hour after he had left her, an attendant, who watched by his orders in an adjoining chamber, heard the sound of feet ascending a private staircase that led from the garden into Isabella’s apartment, and then voices speaking earnestly, and much,—though she could catch no words,—which she deemed it wisest to keep secret. The next day the countess seemed

more even than usually absorbed and gloomy ; but as gloom was her habitual mood, no curiosity was excited.

—X.—

There is a certain feeling of mental languor, which is perhaps more insupportable than the sharp torture of active evil,—a state of utter exhaustion. When the mind can no longer renew itself either by hope or by reflection, when new circumstances have ceased to produce new impressions, and habitual ones have been worn down into flatness, honourable men, or those who had been ever counted such, have been known to rush into error,—crime perhaps, to escape from the fearful vacuum which succeeds the intense action of an overworked imagination, the death-like calm which follows the mental tempest. It was in this state of mind that Origo found the unhappy Dalberg, and by the aid of powerful eloquence, skilful deception, and apparent nobleness of purpose, worked—for desperate ends—upon an enfeebled and easily persuaded nature, fallen from the height of passion into the depths of inanity.

He no longer loved Isabella, but he pitied her; and that sentiment alone kept down the feeling of horror which sometimes struggled against it when he thought of the past, and reflected on the ties by which he had bound up his fate with hers. But he seldom reflected, and it required some violent stimulus to awaken him from the apathy of exhausted sensation. He had worn out every thing with the exception of one dangerous and as yet untried resource,—political excitement. Origo presented it to him under the shape best fitted to enthrall a mind, that looked about in despair for some cornice projecting from the smooth-worn surface of life, against which it might jar itself and be quickened, even though lacerated, and saw it seized upon with an avidity which gave ample assurance of future influence.

What Origo's purpose may have been, it is not attempted to define. It is probable that he did not reveal to Dalberg enough of his projects to endanger his own security; but only sufficient to obtain that power over his mind and actions, which it appeared to him of vital necessity to secure. With him Dalberg visited dangerous places, and went amongst desperate people, risking

his name, even his life, in their foul society ; but finding, in the very hazard and mystery of his present craft, the revival of that capacity of feeling which he had believed extinct.

There existed at this time in a distant suburb of Vienna, far removed from the splendid residence of the Count Dalberg, a lone house of evil reputation, inhabited by an old man, his wife, and his daughter Ninetta, a quick-witted spirited girl, but already an active agent in the iniquitous traffic carried on in the dwelling of her father ; who, being connected with a gang of desperate freebooters, received their plunder and aided in its disposal.

It happened that one morning a labourer, going to his work, having occasion to cross a wood in the neighbourhood of the lone house, discovered a dead body thrown amidst some bushes. It was evidently the corpse of one who had been murdered. The alarm was given, the people of the neighbourhood gathered round the spot, and Ninetta—being among the foremost, recognised the body for that of a man who had come to her father's house in the company of one whom she had

understood to be a nobleman of high rank. She also declared that she had seen them quit the house together at a late hour of the night; and looking from a window, had observed them to take the path near to which the body had been found. More she refused to disclose until brought before the proper authorities; when there, she repeated her story, and revealed the name of Dalberg.

Her evidence was so consistent, that the arrest of Dalberg was immediately ordered, and as speedily executed, without noise or publicity. When confronted with Ninetta, he had on the same clothes which he had worn the preceding evening, and in the inside of one of the pockets were discovered stains of blood. A knife of remarkable form, found near the body, was acknowledged by Dalberg to be his; but he declared in the most solemn manner, that it had not been in his possession for several days, and that he had believed it either stolen from him, or lost. When taxed with having visited the lone house, he appeared confused, answered evasively, and at length acknowledged that he had been there, though only for a few minutes, and merely to fulfil an appointment. With whom, he refused to

say ; but alleged that he had left the house almost immediately, and unaccompanied.

Many efforts were made to extort from him the name of the person to whom he had given a rendezvous in so suspicious a place, but in vain. It was Origo ; but a high sense of honour prevented his naming one, whose plans would have been frustrated, and life endangered, by the discoveries which must inevitably have followed. The risk to Dalberg would have been trifling in comparison with the odium which the mystery of denial threw upon his cause ; for he was but partially initiated in Origo's secrets, and still stood on the brink of the flood, into which his bolder leader waded up to the lip.

While Dalberg's evasive answers, or perplexed silence, momentarily augmented the prejudice which from the first had been strongly against him, Ninetta's evidence became every moment more conclusive. She now deposed, that she had herself lighted him and his companion to the door, and in this point her deposition was strengthened by the testimony of both her parents. It was also proved, that the murdered man had been frequently seen to enter Dalberg's house, and had once been known to have spoken with him in

private, and to have been dismissed with threatening gestures.

All these circumstances, coupled with the stains of blood, the knife, the unknown something which it was evident that Dalberg struggled to conceal, weighed heavily against him. His doom seemed inevitable. Origo visited him in his prison, and urged him to make confession of whatever might be likely to better his cause, without considering how he himself might be affected by it. But Dalberg remained firm, replying to Origo's entreaties, "The blood, the knife, the girl's clinching oath,—is there any thing that we can say which can unhinge such evidence? No, my generous friend, not a hair of your head shall be touched, not a thought laid open." Origo took the tone of expostulation, even of anger, but Dalberg kept his ground; he melted into admiration, but Dalberg refused praise. "If (said he) your evidence could save me, I might be weak or wicked enough to push you down, that I might step upon you; but fate has spared me this horrible temptation. What, my friend, would your generous sacrifice avail? Nothing for my preservation; while the grief of seeing you involved in my danger, would

annihilate whatever strength or presence of mind I may yet possess.”

Origo suffered himself to be convinced, though—as it seemed—reluctantly, and then departed to put in action (as he said) the springs over which unbounded confidence had given him power, for the liberation of his friend. But there seemed to exist a counteracting influence stronger than any under his control, which worked secretly, and undermined the scaffolding of hope as fast as he could construct it; and neither the weight of Dalberg’s high name, family influence, or unblemished character (for a woman’s wrongs are seldom calendered against the wronger) seemed likely to countervail the proofs which thickened round him.

And now he sat alone in his prison cell, with the errors of his life spread open like a book before him. How foul and dark seemed the pages on which Isabella’s name was written, and how luminous those pure ones bright with the story of his early love! The image of Margaret attended him in his dungeon with the solicitude of affection: she was there again—gentle, and young, and beautiful,—in her own atmosphere

of truth and tenderness. But there was another Margaret behind her, a pale and shrouded one; and when that image came before him, all the torments of the condemned seized upon his soul.

—XI.—

The first snows of winter had fallen, and covered the fields with its white winding-sheet; the tall pines of the forest, which sheltered the monastic turrets of the Kloster, spread out their funereal arms, dressed in the same monotonous livery; the glassy lake was now a solid plain, and the woodman steered his sledge over its crackling surface; the boats were drawn up under the hollow of a rock, and the thin wreath of smoke alone told that there were still inhabitants within the silent cottage. Outside the walls all was still; the sound of a distant gun, the flight of a solitary bird, or the track of a wild deer in the snow, alone spoke of life. The dingy sky seemed to rest on the tops of the mountains, and if a breath of wind stirred, the boughs yielded to the gentle movement, and shook off their white burthen

in heavy flakes, that melted into moisture as they touched the earth.

But within, the cheerful wood fire again blazed in the old hall, and Mina stood with Herman beside her, gazing—one with a look of tender curiosity, the other with an expression of sorrowful thought, on a portrait to which Herman had given the last touch. It was the image of Margaret, as love had embalmed it in the recollection of her son,—sad and beautiful, like the tender light of the evening star; a breathing portrait, for the heart had worked at it, and the accurate memory of affection helped it out with its life touches.

“ I wish it were not so true,” said the curate; “ it is like bringing up a shadow from the grave. If the grave were not there, it would be well; but that stands always yawning behind it. There is the same difference between a portrait in the heart and one on canvas, as between the absent and the dead. When I am alone with my heart, I find your mother there; I forget that she is gone, I no longer remember the for-ever! She comes before me in so many familiar ways, that I find in this mysterious correspondence the same ineffable charm, the same going along with the object loved, the same sweet

variety, which render the letters of dear and distant friends so precious to us. But this portrait—I know not why,—its very identity shocks me: its one look, its one position, the voice which seems to burst from the lips, but whose sound will never be heard! the deception that does not deceive, the movement that is immobility,—the immobility of death! But the Margaret of my memory has voice and motion; we talk together. I speak, and her sweet voice answers me. When I walk in my garden at evening and look towards the mountains, I often think that she may dwell there in some embowered paradise, and that she will come again to visit me in my solitude, as she sometimes used to do at the close of day. But here she stands on the threshold of promise, mocking the heart with the glow and surface of life, but chained and motionless. O no! not being life, it is too like it to be gazed on with tranquillity.”

“ Yet I,” said Mina, in a voice full of tears, “ could gaze on it for ever. So she looked when I last saw her, and she put the chain of flowers round my neck which she had woven to please my childish fancy. It is dust now, but I shall keep it for ever.”

“ Ah,” said Waldeck, “ we shall never see any thing like her ; she was the woman ! the good, the beautiful ! I cannot think with Reichter : this portrait of thine, dear Herman, is to me worth a thousand recollections. Often when I have tried to place her image before me, some other has started up and mingled with it,—some turn of countenance that faintly resembled hers, perhaps some figure in a picture that had fixed my attention by a touch of likeness, until my mind became a chaos in which memory lost itself. I was not so blest as our good friend,” he added with a sigh. “ I could not see her as she had been ; but now she is again before me, and the disjointed recollections which oppressed my heart have taken shape and colouring.”

“ See,” exclaimed the curate, turning from the portrait, “ how the sun shines out upon us, making diamonds of our snow. You are going homewards, Mina ?”

“ Yes ; will you bear us company ?”

The curate assented, but lagged behind with Rheinart, while Herman and Mina walked forward, their minds full of gentle melancholy, of tender recollections. They were silent, but their hearts

understood each other; there was no thought unanswered,—for they loved.

It was past mid-day; the sky was now clear, and blue, and the sun in its magnificence, making a sparkling world wherever its bright beams touched the feathery snow, or glistened on the light crystals that weighed down every branch and encrusted every briar. What a glorious spectacle does a country of mountains offer to the eye on such a day! what untouched sources are opened to the imagination! the unbroken majesty of the single tint, the fragile delicacy of the details, and the absence of all the vexing nakedness of winter nature, over which the equal snow has drawn its pure oblivious veil! But the sun must shine; when the sky is bleak and heavy, the earth looks like a vast tomb, covered with one general shroud, and the universal silence has a voice of mourning in it.

“Who is that,” exclaimed Rheinart, “who comes down the hill on horseback?”

“It is Conrad,” said Mina, shading her eyes with her hand and looking forward. “No, it is a stranger; what can he want with us?”

But they had not time to speculate on proba-

bilities; for the horseman, descending rapidly through the forest, approached Herman, and having put a letter into his hands, was out of sight before the tongue could question him.

The missive contained these words:—"Your father is in prison accused of murder, and condemned by the opinion of his judges. If by torture, solitude, and privations, he should be reduced to that state of feebleness which may end in self-accusation, he must die! Reflect on this, and know, at the same time, that he is innocent."

Herman trembled from head to foot; horror and astonishment paralysed his faculties. The handwriting startled him; it seemed somewhat like the Countess Isabella's, but the lines were irregular, and the page blotted. To interrogate the messenger was his first thought, but he had vanished; his next was to prepare for immediate departure. Rheinart and Emanuel both wished to accompany him; but he felt as if, in his actual state of mind, even the presence of those dear and tried friends would have been oppressive to him.

"Thanks, my kind neighbours," he said, "but I must meet this trial alone: truth, and my faith in heaven, shall be my armour. My father is

innocent ; of that my heart assures me, and means will, I firmly trust, be found to prove it. The shade of my mother will go with me, it will be my light and guide ; and the husband of her true and faithful heart shall not perish for an uncommitted crime, while her son has life to defend him." Then pressing a fond and sad farewell on the pure cheek of his trembling Mina, he returned hastily to the Kloster. In three days she was to have been his bride ; but could he have been happy even with her, while his father stood upon the steps of a scaffold ?

—XII.—

As Herman passed under the porch of his father's prison, the clock struck. It was exactly at that same hour, that six years before he had quitted Vienna with his mother, when she left it for the last time. He remembered to have heard a clock strike then, and the sound seemed one of evil augury.

Since that time, his appearance had totally changed ; he was no longer the gay, bright boy,

with an open brow and a cheek flushed with the warm glow of hope; but a man looking three or four years older than he really was,—a fine thoughtful head, with the light of mind and the shading of reflection in it. His hair was darker than it had been, his complexion paler; even his features had undergone a remarkable alteration. The rich material beauty of his boyhood had taken another and a more ideal form, and it was only when he smiled that the likeness of his former self could be traced.

He presented himself under an assumed name at the door of his father's prison, but was refused admittance. He had then no settled plan of defence, but hoped to have found materials for one, had an interview been permitted. The jailer, touched with his evident emotion, allowed him to sit down, and freely entered into the subject of Count Dalberg's imputed crimes. The proofs against him were (he said) too strong to admit of doubt; but the count's firmness had hitherto defeated justice. Herman listened with intense anxiety, and though he felt convinced of his father's innocence, yet the weight of opposing evidence made his heart quake within him.

Dalberg was to undergo an examination on the following day, which his judges, fatigued by his obstinacy, hoped would be final. To be present was Herman's most immediate wish, and the jailer, yielding to the temptation of a bribe, and, it might be, to a feeling of humanity, (for without suspecting Herman's affinity to the prisoner he saw and pitied his distress,) promised to procure for him the means of admission. With this straw to hold by, he returned to his humble lodging at an inn in the neighbourhood of the prison.

He lay down, but could not sleep. The image of his father led out to suffer death, his head on the ignominious block, his honour in the dust, his high name confounded with those of the most atrocious criminals, lay like a mountain on his breast. The word *father*, often pronounced with horror, became once more a dear and reverend sound; and the same heart whose wrathful feelings had almost engendered vengeful ones, was softened into an entire forgiveness of injury. He rose again, but the same image pursued him. He opened the window, and looked out into the street; a single lamp hung before the door of the inn; it was the only light visible, and its dreary ray fell upon the

surface of the opposite wall. The wooden image of a white horse, placed over the entrance gate of the inn, stood out in its glare, with the mane floating and the hoof uplifted. All the rest was dark, except a small illuminated spot which seemed to hang in the air; it was the clock in the belfry of the neighbouring church, which being lighted from behind, still pointed out the hours to those sad watchers who, like Herman, counted its leaden, but too swift progress. There was something solemn in the marked and measured movement of time going its ceaseless pace, while nature itself seemed to stand still: it was like the wakefulness of eternity,—eternity which never sleeps, which leaves all things behind it, yet remains for ever,—greatest of rewards, most horrible of punishments!

Close to the church was the prison; and though it was shrouded in the general darkness, yet Herman fancied that he could trace the outline of the dismal tower in which he knew that his father was confined. But soon this dreary contemplation became too much for his weakened mind; importunate fancies thickened on him: he closed the window, but the shade of his mother seemed to move beside him, saying, in her living

voice, "Save thy father, Herman; save him, even with thy life." His mind became violently disturbed; he lay down, the same words seemed to be again repeated; they sunk into his soul, and in this brain-heated moment he swore to do the bidding of the shadow, which his own imagination had conjured up from the grave.

At an early hour the next morning the jailer came to him, and they went together to the hall where the examination was to take place; and there, posted in an obscure spot, Herman waited, with feelings wound up to the pitch of agony, the appearance of his father. After the lapse of more than an hour, the doors opened and Dalberg entered,—not with the firm step of other days, but with the same high and noble bearing that distinguished him from all others.

The interrogation began, and to the adroit and insidious questions put to him, Dalberg answered with the calmness which became an innocent man. Herman's whole frame shook; all the love, the admiration which he had felt in childhood for his father revived within him, and his heavy faults

were forgotten in his eminent misfortune. Nothing fresh could be elicited by the examination; Dalberg firmly maintained his innocence, but refused (as he had done before) to explain the motive of his visit to the lone house on the evening of the murder. He was again confronted with Ninetta, whose hardy consistency would have startled any other than Herman; but his conviction was not to be shaken, and the high enthusiasm which makes self-sacrifice a joy, a glory, was rapidly mounting to its height, when a remark from Ninetta, which seemed to embarrass Dalberg and made the moment a fearful one, caused its instant explosion.

“If I speak false,” she said, “confute me; but before you judge, let the count be requested to state where he first met Conrad Blume, the murdered man.”

A shade passed over the face of the count; his brow darkened, the blood rushed into his cheeks, and then as suddenly retreating, left an ashy paleness behind it. A word seemed to tremble on his lip: Herman was terror-struck; the thought seized him that in that word was condemnation. He stood forward before it could be pronounced, and called out in a firm tone, “Cease to torment the innocent; I am the murderer!”

A burst of astonishment, and then a solemn pause, succeeded this strange avowal. Dalberg looked round like one awakened from a dream; life, honour, name, seemed again his own unforfeited possessions. Here was a turn of fate which none had counted on, an instantaneous transition from ignominy and death to the full restitution of all those natural and social privileges, of which a base and daring accusation had nearly deprived him. But when the first exulting feeling had subsided, it struck even him—whom the confession had lifted up from death—with horror, that one so young, and of a mien so calm and noble, should have dipped his hands in blood.

Meanwhile Herman, delivered up by his own words into the hands of the law, thus addressed the administrators of justice, whom astonishment still kept silent :—

“ That I have murdered Conrad Blume, is sufficiently attested by my own avowal; for where is the man who would willingly brand himself with the foulest of crimes, while he felt that he was guiltless of it? Of this, therefore, I shall say no more. Why I became against my nature an assassin, is a secret which belongs to myself alone. Justice, appeased by my acknow-

ledgment, can require nothing more, except the last atonement, which I am now prepared to make. But should incredulity demand a confirmation of what I have averred, this is my answer : I it was who, three days previous to the crime, possessed myself of the knife with which it was committed; it was I who, having concealed myself in Count Dalberg's chamber an hour after I had sent my enemy's soul to its account, cunningly put the marks of blood upon his clothes. You would ask, 'How gained you the entrance to that chamber?' By the low door hidden behind the arras, over which is hung the small picture of Belshazzar's feast. You would know where I concealed myself? Behind the base of the veiled statue which fronts you as you enter from the eastern gallery. To be brief, it was I who waylaid Conrad Blume as he passed alone through the wood; for that he was alone, that girl who has dared, for some un conjectured purpose to swear away the life of an innocent man, well knows,"—and his searching eye fixed itself on Ninetta, as though it would look into her soul.

The girl, appalled by his glance, turned away; but still steady to her purpose, repeated her asseve-

ration, saying, “ I stood at the window, and marked the prisoner as he quitted the house with Conrad. I saw them take the path through the wood, and followed them with my eyes till they had reached the spot where the footways cross.”

“ And yet this spot—(Herman knew it well)—is full six bow shots’ length from the house where the accuser stood, and watched on a black and stormy night the movements of the accused and his victim ?”

Ninetta appeared for a moment confounded, and Herman, looking at her with more gentleness, said, “ Poor girl, your heart is not yet utterly corrupted ; you have been suborned to impeach an innocent man by some one who—for your perdition—you love or fear. You are too young to be perjured for the love of gold ; but one who has obtained an evil influence over your mind, has employed it to infernal purposes. If your eyes did really behold any part of that bloody tragedy, look at me, and say if I am not the man ?”

Ninetta looked at him, but more like one who did so in admiration than in horror ; and then said, in a firm voice, “ You are not the man ; you could not have done it !”

“ I could do any thing in just vengeance,” said Herman, turning his flashing eyes upon her.

“ Not that !” she cried, “ not that !”

Here the interrogator, addressing himself to Herman, inquired his name.

“ Frederich Scheffer.”

The usual questions followed, and were answered as Herman’s judgment directed ; after which the prisoners were dismissed till the next day.

During the night which intervened, many and various feelings struggled in the breast of Herman. In as far as his life was concerned he willingly, even eagerly laid it down to redeem that of his father. But a young heart, and one that loves and is beloved, does not resign its fair prospect of futurity without a pang. Perhaps it would be too much to say that Herman felt no regrets, no tugging at the heart-strings ; but his moral courage was great, and in his religious faith he found a support that neither slid nor trembled. His great dread had been lest his father should have discovered him, even through the changes which time, premature care, and manhood, aided by every art of which he

could take advantage without hazard of detection, had wrought upon his person; and the feeling with which he saw Dalberg's eyes pass over his face as over that of a stranger, might well be called a joyful one, however ill the word joy may accord with the occasion.

Herman was an enthusiast in the loftiest sense of the word; an enthusiast from temperament and from genius; an enthusiast in virtue. Enthusiasm seemed in him the natural expression of thought, not its awakener; it was his soul that, enlarged by meditation, overflowed its bounds, and found channels of speech and action. And at that moment so full was that pure soul of its high and holy purpose, that he would not have exchanged his prison and his sacrifice for the sceptre of the earth.

“What a glorious privilege,” said he, mentally, “is mine! If by the giving up of life a little before the time when nature would have demanded it, I can preserve my father from the glaive of the executioner, rescue his name from obloquy, and surround his redeemed years with honour, ought I not to be thankful to that mighty Providence which has deigned to make me the instrument of its

justice?" And in this feeling he slept tranquilly and dreamt of Mina, whose image alone cast a shadow over the almost celestial temper of his mind. For he well knew what her love was, and what her grief would be; but he also knew that her courage was great, and that within her woman's form there lived a soul, of which even the overweening spirit of man might be proud.

He employed the first moments of daylight in writing to his friends, to whom he recommended eternal secrecy as to the motive and results of his hasty departure from the Kloster. This he well knew would be religiously observed, and with the natural feeling of an honourable mind, he rejoiced to think that in the awful destiny of the obscure Frederick Scheffer, no trace of the fate of Herman Dalberg could be found; and that amongst the simple and credulous neighbours of the Kloster, entirely removed from all communication with the world, whatever colouring his friends might wish to give to his story would be implicitly believed. "Grieve not, my Mina," he said; "but think of me as one who has gone but a little time before you, and whom you will—as I devoutly trust—rejoin in that bright world of which we have so

often talked with hope and wonder in our lonely walks. Think of me, and of my mother whom you so tenderly loved, as of two imprisoned spirits who now, released from bondage by the same mighty and merciful hand which led them through the desert, wait for you on its confines. Beloved Mina! when you walk at evening in the old forest, or by the side of the lake——But I must not think of that; I must not indulge in the dangerous luxury of recollection. Let us look forward with hope, and that firm confidence which a Christian is permitted to place in the goodness of him in whose hands are the destinies of man, and who will, I trust, pardon the deceptions of which I have been guilty.”

When the prisoners were remanded, Herman appeared serious but undismayed,—with the calm countenance of one who waited certain death, but did not fear it; and Dalberg, altered more by the strong workings of surprise, of joy, of pity, for a man whose unexpected avowal had saved him from the scaffold, than he had been the day before by imprisonment, disgrace, and the horror of approaching death. But the utterly changed was Ninetta. A few hours before she had been fresh

and blooming: now she was pale and haggard, like one who had dreamt of crime—or done it; her eye was wild and hollow, and the audacious tone of her voice was changed to a guilty tremble.

It was evident that all her efforts were directed to exculpate Herman, and in her zeal to do so, she seemed to have forgotten that the only way to obtain the desired end was by confirming Dalberg's guilt; but her mind seemed troubled, and for the first time discrepancies appeared in her evidence, which strengthened the idea—now gaining ground—of Dalberg's innocence. Indeed the calm determination with which Herman affirmed himself to be the murderer, left but little room for doubt on the minds of his hearers. What might have been the nature of an injury which could have roused one so young, and of a mien so calm and noble, to the commission of such a deed, none could conjecture; and neither threat of torture, or lure of pardon, could extract from him another word beyond the avowal of the crime. "I am the murderer," he would repeat; "and the terrors of a conscience not yet inured to guilt have wrung from me this disclosure. I prefer death to the pangs I suffer; I prefer it to the awful sight of a

fellow-creature brought to judgment for an act of which I alone am guilty. What those wrongs were which drove me to do that which I abhor, concerns myself alone, and shall be buried with me."

While he spoke, the eyes of Ninetta followed him, glaring with wild impatience; her divided lips seemed bursting to express the words that worked on them, and as he ceased speaking she exclaimed, in a voice that rung through the building, "He must not die! He too is innocent,—both are innocent! It was Frantz Speigler who did it!"

"Let Frantz Speigler be instantly arrested," said the judge: who, accustomed to mark the signs of the mind in the variations of the countenance, had been forcibly struck with the altered appearance of Ninetta. The order was immediately obeyed, and Frantz, whose haunts were well known, was speedily brought forward. He entered the hall with a bold countenance; but when abruptly charged with the murder of Conrad, and suddenly confronted with Ninetta, his courage failed, and giving himself up at once for lost, the shuddering terror, which is observed so frequently to possess the guilty, got the better of his sturdiness, and he confessed the murder.

“It was he,” said Ninetta, “who basely using the power he had obtained over my mind, tutored me to the task which till this hour I have performed too faithfully. On the evening of the murder, a quarrel took place between Frantz and Conrad,—provoked by the former. To this quarrel my mother and myself were the sole witnesses. Conrad left the house first, and Frantz a moment after, vowing vengeance. In a short time he returned; there was blood upon his sleeve and on his hands. We washed it off, and he made us swear a dreadful oath never to disclose what we had seen. Then sending my mother away, he by frightful threats, and the wicked influence with which he ruled my very thoughts, obtained from me the promise of inculcating Count Dalberg, who had come that night to our house, accompanied by a man whose face I did not see. It was the only time the count had ever been there, and I should not have known that it was him, if Frantz had not told me, charging me to mark his features well, so that I might swear to them again if needful. I did so; but those of his companions were too closely muffled for my scrutiny.”

She then proceeded to state, that a lon arrear

of wrongs had influenced the mind of the murdered man against the prisoner, whom he frequently taunted in the presence of others; and she had often heard Frantz swear that he would one day silence his calumnious tongue. She had once known Conrad to do Frantz a great kindness; after which Frantz became his mortal foe, feeling, as it seemed, exasperated that his enemy should have found the means of laying him under obligation. But in murdering him, she believed that Frantz had not only gratified his own deep and wakeful spirit of revenge, but was also the instrument of another; and that this other, whom she knew not, designed for some purpose of vengeance, likewise unknown to her, to use his agency towards effecting Count Dalberg's destruction. To forward this intent, he had made Frantz master of a knife of remarkable form, which had long been in the count's possession, and which the former had shown her on the night previous to the murder. She further added, that Frantz had frequently boasted that he was employed by one who possessed mountains of gold; and having done so once in the presence of Conrad, the latter—not to be outdone—replied that he too had his employer, and that he

was master of many secrets which concerned high nobles of Vienna, who dared not refuse to see him even in their own houses. From all which she judged that both were, unknown to each other, the tools of some mighty and wicked man, who used them as the active instruments of his vengeful designs.

It was in the interval between Ninetta's denunciation of Frantz and his apprehension, that these disclosures were made. When he was brought in and placed face to face with her, habitual dread appeared for a moment to obstruct her utterance; but she looked at Herman, and immediately felt her courage revive, and the passionate earnestness with which, while unveiling crime, she justified innocence, proved that in the midst of guilt, in the heart of infamy, there sometimes exists a germ of tenderness, which sagacious treatment might ripen into fruit.

Frantz, taken by surprise, and astounded at the unexpected declaration of Ninetta, confessed his crime; but refused, with a sentiment of fidelity which sometimes lingers in the basest minds, to disclose the name of the master whom he obviously served. But the approved means of subduing

obstinacy had not yet been resorted to, and he was conducted to prison, where solitary confinement, torture, and utter darkness,—the sure keys which unlock the closest secrets of ignoble minds, and sometimes, alas ! of those more finely organized, were still to be tried.

Dalberg and Herman remained behind, and Ninetta, who was detained to serve if necessary as a future witness, stood near them. Strange thoughts passed over Dalberg's mind. " Who is this man—this Frederick Scheffer—this utter stranger ? who, to defend my life, would have offered up his own ? Do strangers make such sacrifices for strangers ? My son indeed, were he near me," said Dalberg half audibly, and then pausing as if startled at some sudden suggestion, looked towards Herman. But Herman had drawn his cap over his eyes, and the pale cheek and dark mustachio concealing the curve of the lip, contradicted Dalberg's memory.

Meanwhile, Ninetta approached tremblingly, and addressing Herman in a timid voice, said, " I am a guilty wretch, not fit to look upon you ; but I would take with me one remembrance. Let me

touch your hand." Herman gave her his hand, which she grasped with eagerness, and would have kissed, but shame withheld her. "I am not worthy," she said, and dropped it timidly.

"Poor girl!" said he, with gentleness, "there is still much that is good about thee; much that I would save if I could."

"Save me!" she cried, grasping his hand, "save me! and I will follow you on my knees! I will be your slave, and you shall be my master,—I will serve and die for you!"

"No!" interrupted Herman, "you shall live,—live too, I trust, to be something far different from what your wicked guides would fain have made you!" And as he spoke, he looked kindly on her and smiled.

It was the first time, since his sudden apparition in that spot, that a smile had played upon his lips, and Dalberg, whose eyes had never wandered from his face, and whose perplexed feelings had been momentarily rising to agony, caught it as it passed. At the same instant the truth flashed upon him, and shrieking out, "My Herman!" he dropped back as if ecstasy had snapped the thread of life. Restored again, he threw himself on his son's neck,

embraced him closely, looked in his face as if he would have spelt his features, and then turned away and wept.

“My father!” said Herman, deeply affected, “you will not cast me from you?”

“Cast you from me!” exclaimed Dalberg. “You! my brave son, who would have sold yourself to death for me! O no! once—but you have forgiven me—you will no longer—”

“My father!” interrupted Herman in a supplicating tone.

“He is your father,” exclaimed Ninetta, who had listened breathlessly. “Glorious creature! and you would have died for him! O power of duty! power of love! how long have ye been hidden from me! But he was good, no doubt, and virtuous, or you could not have loved him thus.”

Herman would have drawn away his father, but he advanced towards Ninetta.

“Far otherwise,” he said, in a tone of solemn accusation; “his noble act is the repayal of a deep and grievous injury. The father, whose life he would have ransomed with his own, had cast him off—had abandoned him, and his sweet and vir-

tuous mother." Here Herman seized his father's hand, and would again have turned him from Ninetta, but could not.

"No!" he cried, "let me tell her what a wretch I have been, and how she rose above me in her purity. Angel of heaven! did she think of me, Herman? Did she say, 'God forgive the sinner, the terrible sinner,' for it was I who killed her—murdered her with neglect! worse than the dagger—worse than the dagger!" he repeated, in a wild hurried way; then falling at the feet of Herman, hid his face and wept.

"My father, my dear father! do not kneel at my feet—at your son's, who should kneel to you. O my father! let this end; I cannot bear it!" and he raised Dalberg from the ground, embracing him tenderly, and as he pressed him to his heart repeating, "Let this end, let it be forgotten if you love me,—if you pity me."

"Rather let it be remembered for ever," returned Dalberg, in a calmer tone. "Never be it forgotten that a son, cast off, rejected, almost disowned—or worse, forgotten,—came with his young life, so full of hope and promise, and offered it for the redemption of his injurer!"

“ Lord hear me !” exclaimed Ninetta, with strong emotion. “ If in thy great mercy thou didst ever intend good for me, who am a sinner, let it be bestowed on these men ! I have had enough in seeing them, in knowing that there is such a thing as virtue,—I, who have mocked it in my bitter guilt !”

“ You have not mocked it in your heart,” said Herman, in a voice of kindness. “ Take courage, poor Ninetta ; this day has saved thee from sin. Who knows what to-morrow may bring with it ?”

The morrow brought with it many things,—but of these more hereafter.

—XIII.—

Dalberg returned to his home free and justified ; but his heart was sad, for Herman was not with him. The mission of the son was fulfilled. He had seen his father restored in honour to his high place in society ; and refusing steadily to become a sharer in his restored fortunes, had returned to his hermitage, and to his gentle Mina. Nor could

Dalberg press him, even on the threshold of his door, to enter; for within was the Countess Isabella, whose name came upon his ear like the tolling of a death-bell.

The Count Camillo was there too, and advanced to welcome Dalberg, but with a pale, still look in his eyes that startled him. Isabella lingered longer, but came at last, and so horribly changed, that Dalberg shuddered as she approached.

“You are safe,” she said, taking his hand between her bony ones; “they have not killed you!” Then looking round, as if afraid of something, she marked the eyes of Origo fixed upon her, and dropped the hand of Dalberg with a terrified movement. She had never visited Dalberg in prison, a circumstance which in other moments might have pained him; but he had felt relieved by her absence, and only regretted to hear that it had been caused by grief and illness; but he was not prepared for the shocking change which had taken place, and his heart dissolved into pity when he saw her.

“This Frantz,” said Origo, when Isabella had retired, “seems a timid villain; more may be got from him.”

“ I doubt it ; the name of his employer—for he has had one—will, I think, die with him.”

“ It were best it should not,” observed Origo calmly. “ Is he ironed ?”

“ Heavily.”

“ And in the dungeon near to the water’s edge ?”

“ I think they said so.”

Origo paused a moment, and then muttered inwardly, “ To night—or never !”

Night came, and Dalberg sat by the couch of Isabella, who gently pressed him to quit her. “ To-morrow, my love,” she said, “ you will come to see me. I shall be better then ; I feel that I shall ; but now good night !” Then advancing her cheek towards him, “ One kiss—one kiss,” she said, while her voice trembled. “ O Dalberg, how I have loved you ! and what a sinner that love has made of me !” Then raising herself from her couch, she fell on her knees before him. “ Say that you pardon me, Dalberg,—that you forgive her who has involved your honour and destroyed your peace. Speak, as I tell you, my beloved ; it will lighten my poor heart.”

Dalberg complied with her wild fancy, and repeated the words of pardon which she dictated to him. "Now," she said, "good night. Kind and dear Dalberg, I will go to bed and sleep, for you have blest me." He would have staid with her, but she insisted on his retiring, and after a fond "good night," they parted.

Voices and bitter weeping were again heard that night in Isabella's chamber, and steps descending the small staircase. At midnight the bell rang, and was answered by an attendant, who found the countess standing before a table, white as a ghost and with the death-look, as the woman expressed it, in her eyes. Her voice, too, was slow and hollow, like a funeral knell.

"Is it not true," she said, "that Catharine Matt is dying?"

"I fear so, madam."

"Take this lamp, and light me to her chamber." The attendant did as she was ordered.

Isabella entered the sick room with a cautious step. Two women watched by the bed-side; she motioned them to retire. They did so; and then kneeling down, she took the pale hand that lay upon the bed-clothes, and pressed a kiss mingled

with tears upon it. The dying woman was still in full possession of her senses.

“O madam,” she said, “how good you are to visit your servant in her hour of trial.”

“Dear Catharine, say not servant, but friend,—have you not always been my best and truest? Had I listened to your counsel, I should not— But it is all over now. And you, my Catharine, surely you must feel better to seem so tranquil.”

“I shall be better, madam, I humbly hope; but there is a struggle yet to come, an awful one. Heaven will, I trust, assist me. But, dearest lady, how pale you look!”

“Has your life been a happy one, Catharine?”

“I have great reason for gratitude, madam, but no one is completely happy. If we were perfectly happy here, death would be too bitter; but religion promises us a better world; it teaches us to hope—”

“Hope! the death-bed hope! How fine, and yet how fearful!” said Isabella, shudderingly. “Catharine, you have been a good and virtuous woman; give me your prayers. You will not be long before me, but shall we meet? or will the great gulph be placed between us? Ah, there’s

the question, to which no answer can be given. But your prayers, dear Catharine, your prayers!" and she clasped her hands together, and prayed aloud.

The dying woman prayed also, in a weak but earnest voice. Then Isabella rose from her knees, and imprinting a kiss on the forehead of her servant, said, in a hollow tone, "Go in peace, thou good and faithful one! I came here to beg thy blessing, but I dare not give thee mine. Farewell! your prayers have given me comfort. When you are in heaven, cry with a loud voice, 'Have mercy on her who is a sinner.'" Then quitting the room with a slow step, she regained her apartment.

At four o'clock, before the day had dawned, a sentinel on duty near to the river saw something white rush by him. He had just shaken the ashes from his pipe, and had struck a light to re-kindle it; and by its glare he could distinguish enough to imagine that it was the ghost of the Countess Isabella, with whose figure he was familiar from having often been on guard at the palace when she had come there on days of pageantry. That it was nothing living, he had judged from its deadly whiteness, and its whizzing by as if it had no feet.

A moment after he heard a strange noise in the waters, and at the same instant the clouds opened and a livid moonbeam falling on the stream, he saw something like a human body carried rapidly down with the current. But again there was darkness, and his eye could no longer follow it.

The Countess Isabella was never seen after that night, and the soldier's story gaining credit, it was believed,—and is to this day,—that she had drowned herself in the Danube. On that same night another violent death was consummated within the city walls. The murderer Frantz was found strangled in his dungeon; but whether by his own hand, or by that of some one who had found means of secret access to his prison, still remains doubtful.

Nor was the Count Origo ever afterwards heard of at Vienna, though he was known to exist at a much later period; having been seen and recognised at Rosetta, in Egypt, by a man who remembered him as one mixed up with Dalberg's mysterious story. To this stranger he was pointed out by a Venetian then at Rosetta, as the betrayer of the fair Olympia Doni, who having been leagued with him in many evil deeds,—foreign perhaps to

her early nature,—had in a moment of horror and disgust fled from his revolting tyranny; an abandonment which, it was said, he had afterwards deeply revenged. Whether the Countess Isabella was in any way connected with this story, the speaker knew not, nor was any further light ever thrown upon the history of her youth; neither did the Venetian know any thing more of the circumstances of Origo's life. The name he had borne at Venice was a different one; he had come there a stranger, had imposed on society by his specious manners, silenced inquiry by his splendour, and had disappeared before he had become an object of suspicion.

Ninetta's repentance was profound and lasting; if it had begun in passion for an object lifted as much by virtue as by station above her, it soon took another and a safer colouring. Her return to virtue was not the result of a transient feeling of casual remorse; but of a sincere and entire consciousness of her deep and heavy guilt, and a conviction that by divine assistance alone its weight could be removed. With this feeling she entered a religious community, whose members devoted

their lives to offices of charity,—going amongst the criminal, the sick, the needy,—exhorting, watching, comforting, praying; and years, as they passed, found her still daily strengthening in religious hope, and happy in the exercise of virtue.

Herman—now the husband of his beloved Mina—found within the woods of the old Kloster the ‘Mount Amara,’ the true paradise of his heart; and resigning firmly and for ever a station connected in his mind with associations too painful to be gilt into brightness by its splendour, and a world by which he had been long considered dead, gave to the name, which he afterwards adopted as his own, the undying lustre with which genius can surround the most obscure appellation. That name is known wherever the high powers of mind and the gifts of wisdom and eloquence are honoured; and some, believing that they read the author in his works, and who had therefore loved and wished to know him, made pilgrimages to his solitude, and returned edified by the sight of the good and simple man; who, living like a patriarch in the midst of his fair and virtuous family, seemed to be the only one who had not heard of his own fame.

Dalberg having often and vainly endeavoured to change Herman's resolution, at length resigned himself to it. The episode which had darkened the story of his life was, as far as the charge of murder was concerned, known but to a few, his family having had interest enough to keep the proceedings secret. It is not written in the archives of the house of Dalberg, nor was it ever bruited in the world. For a time, the dark events connected with it threw a gloom over his mind ; but his impressions were always rather strong and sudden, than deep and permanent ; and after a sharp agony, and a short retirement from society, he found that his stock of recollections were not fitted for solitude. He had been all his life a lover of the world, spoiled by it and dependant on it. It reclaimed him, and he returned at its call, no longer as a man of gallantry, or a secret supporter of mysterious associations, but as a minister and court favourite.

But over one green spot in his heart the world had no power ; the sentiment of admiration, of tenderness, which he felt for his son, bloomed there like the palm-tree in the desert and freshened the waste

that surrounded it,—a dreary waste, yet not a desert, but too often frightfully peopled with the shadows of the past. In society he was still the high-bred, courtly Dalberg; but in the solitude of his chamber!—ah! the injured are well avenged, even in this world!



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